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# IN THE SERVICE OF THE KING

A PARSON'S STORY

BY

JOSEPH B. DUNN



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
The Knickerbocker Press

1915



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JOSEPH B. DUNN

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

## OVERTURE

It is not infrequent in splendid book shops to see people of undecided minds loitering about idly turning the pages of first one volume and then another, endeavouring through some chance paragraph to make a happy choice.

May their eyes happen upon my brief but enthusiastic appreciation of "In the Service of the King." Nothing can be more thrilling or splendidly optimistic than the author's own prefatory word, but it is not comprehensive enough of qualities so varied as to appeal to every reader—Sinner, Saint, or Pharisee.

Dr. Dunn has a rich, straightforward, broad understanding of that divine illuminating Sermon on the Mount. Those appealing words have so penetrated his heart, that he loves his brother—even his lost and outcast brother—as himself.

And his experiences are told with simplicity, tenderness, hopefulness, and—most wonderful of all—with the salt of humour. They bring to memory a long ago decorous advertisement in the *London Times*:

“Wanted, by an invalid lady, a housekeeper ; must be a good Church woman, to take entire charge of house and four servants. A cheerful Christian, if possible.”

Evidently, the poor lady had suffered under a succession of depressing, gloomy, sour-visaged, Christian housekeepers, who had made life unbearable for the four servants, and added to her own weariness. Her hope was small of finding a Christian with a smiling countenance. That gentle “if possible” covered much tribulation of spirit. We are told that God loves a cheerful giver, and we are certain He loves a cheerful Christian even more. Dr. Dunn strengthens this certainty through his own joyous spiritual and physical life. He makes poverty bearable, love far-reaching, and forgiveness possible. His religion is sincere, patient, convincing, and friendly,—the sort of faith that we all look for in our directors and pastors, but rarely find. His belief in the goodness of human nature is so abiding and indestructible that he inspires the same feeling in his reader, whom he approaches with such candour and enthusiasm as

## Overture

v

to convert him into an ally. And to be on the side of the Angels, even in the scant hours spent in reading a book, is an edifying and beautiful experience.

*Betty O'Connor*

NEW YORK,  
*December 1, 1914.*



## PREFATORY WORD

THE history of the jungle is the record of a never-ending tragedy. The story of the beast is ever the story of surrender to environment. The beast conforms to the pressure of his surroundings till he reaches the limit of his power to conform, then he perishes. He neither is able, nor does he try to conquer conditions. The king-killer dies of starvation at last. The survival of the fittest is only a scene in the earlier stages of the drama. The end is ever the same, failure, surrender, death. The philosophers who proclaim that they have discovered the law of life in the jungle, and point to the tiger's tooth and claw as the evidence of the survival of the fittest, are trumpeters of doom, and preach a gospel of despair.

The story of man is the record of a struggle to change conditions, to overcome the pressure of environment. To conform is to die, to conquer is to live. This volume is the story, told in fire-side fashion, of one who, with his fellows, has struggled to change conditions. At a certain time

in that struggle there came to him with all the vividness of a personal revelation the truth that to be a Christian meant not to be a certain kind of man, but to be all of a man. Since then, awakened interest has ever been accompanied by the discovery of new powers of appropriation, and every contact with what men call a necessary evil has stirred his soul to action and given to life an added zest and a new joy. He has refused to concede Hell's proprietary right to set the mark of the Beast on any man, and has sought to find the hidden human there. What men call human is the divine in man, and the perfect human is the revelation of Divinity. He whom men call Saviour, calls Himself Son of Man.

Some time ago the Editor of *The Churchman* asked the writer to contribute some memories to the pages of his journal. This story had its beginning there. Somehow the story made appeal to men and women so far apart in temperament and outlook that the writer was tempted to continue it in the same vein, in the hope that the intimate speech of the precious things of life might find and claim as kin the imperishable human in other lives.

J. B. DUNN.

LYNCHBURG, VA.,  
Dec. 1, 1914.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
IN COUNTRY AND VILLAGE . . . . .	I
THE TOWN MINISTRY . . . . .	47
THE CITY MINISTRY . . . . .	78
FIRESIDE TALK . . . . .	119





# In the Service of the King

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## IN COUNTRY AND VILLAGE

### I

SOME critic has said that the world is over-rich in the records of life's successes, that everybody knows the psychology of success, but that literature is actually in need of candid autobiographies of mediocrity. Satiated with the glare of bright colours, the reading public is eager for a drab literature. The tired ear longs for the droning monotone of Martin Tupper.

These reminiscences will appeal to tired minds alone. It is a journey through a flat country. There are plenty of resting-places, and the weary reader is not called upon to climb the hill of vision.

Twenty years ago a young student, who all his life long had been fighting shadows under the lamp, was sent as a deacon to take charge of a country parish. This parish was fifty miles long

## 2      In the Service of the King

and thirty-five miles wide. Within its bounds were five churches. The living wage of the labourer was \$600. He rented a cottage, purchased a jumper that had already seen long service, and bought for \$28 at a street auction a small nag that a defeated candidate for a minor office in the country had just used in a campaigning tour. The new owner of this old war horse of Democracy comforted himself with the thought that "the race is not to the swift," and dubbed his little sorrel, "Brer Terrapin." The weapons of his warfare were stored in the cottage. A wonderful arsenal, indeed, it seemed to the infrequent visitor, a thousand old volumes, most of which had been picked up in second-hand shops in Washington and Boston, and a few rare ones from the shelves of a dingy old shop in London.

The mental equipment of the young teacher he soon found to be hopelessly inadequate. His thousand words of Hebrew, kept together till the ordeal of the chaplain's inquisition was passed by a skilfully devised system of mnemonics, were straying away through the broken gaps of memory, till at last one word alone answered to the call of the will. And that one always brought a blush of shame, for it argued an unregenerate spirit. It was the Hebrew word for "tent." Back in the

recesses of his mind lay the dead languages *in mortis rigore*. Science and philosophy, on which he had spent years of toil, had passed through the mill of college examinations and were now but a shapeless mass of pulp. Somewhere among his belongings he had a beautifully engraved bit of parchment certifying that he had finished all these things.

The most vivid, because it was the most recent mental impression (for had he not just studied these things in order to answer the questions of the chaplains?) was the catalogue of the early Christian heresies. As the young teacher took stock of knowledge ready for use, he found in the forefront of his mind a large and varied assortment of refutations. He was prepared to meet higher critics, evolutionists, pantheists, and every other *ic* and *ist* known to the masters of foil in the Theological Seminary. He was eager for the combat, but none of these antagonists were in sight. The problems before him were all problems of life and not of philosophy. How was he to meet listless indifference, ignorant and often bitter provincialism, poverty of thought, and an aspiration that never soared above creature comforts or frivolous pleasure, that was dissipation only in the sense that it was waste of time and opportunity?

#### 4      **In the Service of the King**

Though the young deacon found that his store of knowledge, like the provisions of the first colonists, had spoiled in the hold, still he felt that he was not without resource, for he had brought with him from the seminary two serviceable maxims. They were written large in his notebook, and accepted by him as the final expression of wisdom from the lips of the Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology. The maxims were: "Do not attempt to preach theology; let your sermons be practical," and "Do not waste five-dollar time on a five-cent job."

Some English historian refers to the American Revolution as a revolt of the colonists which England was not able to repress on account of the extent of territory over which the revolt spread. Washington is not mentioned. The victor over England was extent of territory.

The deacon was not called upon to quell a revolt, but he learned to know how formidable an antagonist extent of territory could be.

To preach practical sermons to a people whom he hardly knew—for many of them he saw only on one Sunday in the month—and to economize time when it took two days to drive across his parish, he soon found to be equally impossible tasks. Former deacons had been preaching practical

sermons, and from earliest memory these people had been told the things they must not do. All sense of spiritual and ethical perspective had been destroyed in them. They were living under the Code Leviticus. The Decalogue had been elongated till the list of forbidden things was interminable. The life of the spirit had ceased to be *being*; it consisted in *abstaining*. In the catalogue of sins, card-playing and dancing were cheek by jowl with murder, arson, and theft, and, like Frederick's crack regiment, everyone in line was a giant. A sermon was judged somewhat as the old colored mammy tests medicine, "The bitterer the taste the quicker the cure." The Bible was a great collection of proof-texts, to be used largely for argumentative purposes. Nothing gave quite as much delight as the refutation of some favourite tenet of another church, and the sermon was deemed especially appropriate if some of the people who held these tenets happened to be in church that day.

The deacon never tried to summarize the lessons learned in that first year, but they must have been something like this: If a minister is to be of any lasting benefit to his people he must first of all see to their spiritual education. He must teach them to use their own conscience and not be

## **6      In the Service of the King**

obliged to wait for Sunday to come in order to find out what is wrong. He must teach principles and not precepts. He must share with his people, as the mother-bird shares her food with her brood, every morsel of new knowledge of God that he acquires. He must, in fact, be always preaching theology, in season and out of season, in the pulpit, during the friendly visit, and in the sick-room. He must help his people to know God. The other lesson was only partly learned that year, but the passing years have made it very plain. The lesson is this: there are very few five-cent jobs in a village ministry. If the village parson is to be identified with the life of the little community, then every hour spent with the waiting crowd in the post-office or in the drug store on a rainy day is time put to the very best use. If he is a religious prig he will scatter those crowds into the street, even if it be raining outside; but if he be a man with the conscious purpose in his life of trying to make effective the best that is in men, then intimate acquaintanceship with many minds and many moods of men is necessary. Looking back over those first days, in which he learned far more from his people than he was able to teach them, the village parson realizes that perhaps his best work for God and man was done when he sat with

a crowd around the stove in some store, and by argument and anecdote forced some listless mind to grapple again with the stern problem of right thinking and right living.

At night in the cottage rectory, which the parson called "the smoke-house," being a friend of the pipe, when he got among his books he tried to make the knowledge of his people's needs the criterion of his choice in reading. The volumes on his shelves soon ceased to be mere symbols. Many a spare hour was spent in mastering the table of contents in a book not to be read for months perhaps. His young brain was seething with questions, and one by one he asked of the books about him: "Can you answer my questions?" To know God—that was his quest. This was his people's need and it was his too. As he turns the pages of volumes read in those first years, the marks of the explorer's pick are everywhere. The margins are black with comment, approval, disclaimer, crude questionings, and here and there a boyish "Hurrah!" when some rich find showed up.

And then the sermons! How well he remembers his first attempt to carry out the suggestion of some friend to make them simpler and to avoid the use of unfamiliar words! First every Latin and



## 8      **In the Service of the King**

Greek derivative was underscored and then cut out. Afterwards came the weeding out of all the superlatives. Then every adjective was questioned, and made to show just cause why it should not be expelled. He preached that sermon. It was a theological sermon, and a little tot, a chum of his, told him afterwards: "I understood every word you said." Of course the child did not understand; but the language, if not the ideas, was within the circle of his experience. The experiment proved so interesting that he took a volume of Caird's sermons—sermons rich in thought and suggestions, but clothed in technical and classic language—and deliberately wrote Saxon paraphrases of them. The paraphrase reduced their compass more than one-half; and although the shading of thought and much of the linguistic beauty were done away, he believed then and now believes that their effectiveness was greatly increased.

The Saxon in our speech represents those intimate and elemental things which the conquering Norman could not make our forefathers give up; and village and country preaching deals with intimate and elemental things, and Saxon speech is the direct road to a people's understanding. Never will the village parson forget the response

to a question put to the infant class in the Sunday-school. He gathered the little ones about him and asked: "What kin is God to you, and what kin are you to God?" More than one mother told him afterwards that her child had come home with face all aglow to tell her the fact, now for the first time really made his own: "I am God's child." That word *kin* had unlocked the door of heaven for them.

It may be a case of arrested development, but the boy's point of view still comes easy to him; and the dreams of those days of callow youth still retain their vividness, though now the sun is directly overhead and the noontime glare reveals the fact that the grass is not quite green after all, for purple and yellow, earnest of decay and death, can be seen even in the growing plant. He wishes some facile pencil would sketch the oft-repeated tragedy of the diaconate.

The young soldier of the King, fresh from the drill-room, eager for the fray, and the God within him—for to him at least that is what enthusiasm means—stirring his soul to action, is detailed for his first service. He is fitted by temperament and training to take his place in line and spend his strength in some splendid charge. The one thing he is not fitted for is to conduct a siege, and yet

## 10      In the Service of the King

this is the work for which he is often appointed. He is sent to some parish in an advanced stage of disintegration. He is appointed the counsellor of the aged and the comforter of the disheartened. He is ignorant of the very vernacular of his district and there is none near at hand to teach him. Small wonder that he acquires an artificial tone, and learns to look not at, but beyond, his present task.

If these recollections are to be of any value they must be candid, and a change of pronouns clothes egotism itself with the borrowed garb of modesty. When the deacon looked at his first task, his heart sank within him. It was not that his feelings were those of Mulholland when God sent him back to the cattle-ship to preach His Word:

"I didn't want to do it, for I knew what I should  
get,  
An' I wanted to preach religion, handsome an' out of  
the wet,  
But the Word of the Lord were lain on me an' I done  
what I was set."

It was not that he wanted to do it, "handsome an' out of the wet." The very difficulties of the cattle-ship or the mining camp would each have suggested hardship enough to make the young colt lift his head to take the hill in a gallop. It was

the absence of the heroic that sapped the young deacon's energy. The qualities that fitted him for some other task he found here an actual hindrance. The blessed privilege of youth was a constant handicap. Patient wisdom that had winnowed the chaff of youthful haste was what was needed. The parish needed the wise counsellor whose faith was trained by long experience to count even honest failure a large success. The parish had an enthusiastic boy whose spirit fretted under the utter hopelessness of the task set him. How could he minister to spiritless old age, whose life had been broken at the wheel and who was forced to live in the shadow of defeat, when his youth was vibrant with hope of masteries to be attained?

That he did not utterly fail, and saved the Irish in him for service elsewhere, he ascribes to two facts. His small stipend forced him to be a stay-at-home in body, but when the day's task was done he wandered far afield in thought and in the best of company.

On one of these mental excursions, with dear old Gulliver for guide, he visited the Island of Laputa, and in the laboratory of the famous Academy of Lagoda he saw a great inventor at his work. The man was "of meagre aspect,

with sooty hands and face, his hair and beard long, ragged, and singed in several places." But if his outer form was mean, his gift to men was radiant. He had hit upon a device for extracting sunshine from cucumbers. This sunshine was then stored away in bottles to be used in the home on dark days to light the house.

In that hour, as he watched the old man at his work, the deacon began to find himself. Dimly outlined at first, but gradually defining itself, his mission became clear. He would be the agent of the great inventor, a dispenser of bottled sunshine.

The young deacon pondered the step well, till the whimsical fancy born under the lamp became a fixed purpose. He could not take the place by siege. He could not bridge the moat of separating years. He could not scale the barriers built of broken hopes and cemented with tears. Age and poverty and despair were weapons too strong for him to contend with. An old proverb, never before put to such use, perhaps, came to his mind: "He who laughs disarms himself." The deacon set out to make his people laugh. Counting the cost, he deliberately donned the motley. From house to house through the wide extent of his country parish the deacon, in his jumper drawn by "Brer Terrapin," went hawking his curious

wares. Old college jests, the rude humour of the campus, the homely commonplace of daily life, decked in strange trappings of verse and doggerel; solemn accusation of coquetry brought against silent and lachrymose old ladies of seventy; frivolity laid to the score of embittered and critical old gentlemen; the terrible tragedy of the absent-minded fat lady, Miss Mollie Muggins, who, instead of a pill, swallowed a lighted candle, and the dire consequences of her mistake. Such and such like were the topics of his pastoral ministrations.

With a persistency that even now he feels a pride in, he determined never to desert till he could say that he had heard a laugh from every one of his people. He found out then that the logic in a jest is more insistent in its convincing power than even the rhetorician's suppressed conclusion. Whatever else he may have left undone, the deacon knows that in those first days he taught to many a sad heart the long-forgotten trick of laughter. The laugh unlocked the brighter memories of their far-off youth and they paid him for their laugh in love. Love levels the barriers of age, and though the passing years have swept them far apart, the deacon counts the friends of those days as among the great prizes of life. He

## 14      In the Service of the King

dare not gainsay the wise man's words that the "heart of fools is in the house of mirth"; but experience gives him courage to insist that when the sunshine is unbottled in the house of desolation it discovers many a heart of gold that was near to perishing in the shadow.

The deacon has never known the delectable tinkle of titularity, nor been tempted to watch for the glint of tinsel compliment which is the tribute that eloquence exacts, but he wears upon his heart the message sent from a friend whose struggles upward he watched in that fledgling time: "We have had and lost many ministers since you went away, but you at least, no matter where you are, still belong to us." But above all the rewards of his early ministry he holds the experience of that Sunday, when, for the encouragement of the truest-hearted gentleman he ever knew, he preached a sermon. This was a man who, in the midst of a losing fight with fortune, fought on with quivering lip from which no plaint ever came; whose gracious courtesies in the home, whose simple services of neighbourly helpfulness, and whose hatred of a lie marked him as a man after God's own heart. The sermon was on Isaac, the commonplace man; the man without executive ability, the unprogressive son of a masterful father, but withal a good

neighbour, a good husband, and one who found his place in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, God's own Westminster. When the service was over, and the deacon had just retired to the robing-room, the living Isaac of the parable opened the door, and, gowned as he was, the deacon found himself lifted from his feet and held tight in the bear-like hug of his friend, who, after he had set him down, left without a word.

But all was not plain sailing. The ministry of merriment took him ever into the shadow, just as the healing art keeps the physician ever with the sick. With many of his people he found the case to be that the iron had entered into the soul, and that to attempt to draw it out meant that the life-blood would come too. Better they should brood in sadness than open-eyed and with all the senses awake to face the void of the coming years.

With aching heart he wrought the spell that made the laughter come. It dulled the pain, but the soul's resiliency was gone, and the hands long relaxed could never get their grip on life again. And so it came about that after one of his parish rounds, the deacon reached his home, spent and disheartened. He flung himself into a chair, and too weary even to set going the fires that brought the solace of the pipe, he dropped the reins of the



16      **In the Service of the King**

directing will and let the tired mind pluck the sere grass of old memories. How dull and dead the once keen zest of study, and how withered on the stalk the bright flower of his youthful hopes! One by one he counted the years of preparation for his task. He saw again the boy haranguing his playmates from the cellar-cap. He smiled as he remembered how his volubility had won their praise. The steady grind of the course, the eager passion of his study at the seminary—how meaningless they seemed! The fragment of a line of Browning came to him: "Down dark lanes that lead no whither." He had found his way into one of life's blind-alleys, and was doomed to perish there. His bitterness was just as poignant as if he had been large enough of soul to have made a large failure, for he had measured the possibilities of service not by his ability to achieve, but by his hope.

## II

YOUTH has no philosophy with which to combat the aching sense of failure. It has not yet learned to borrow from time's banker, the future, the means to tide it over its present distress. It has failed, and there's an end of all things. Of course it lays the blame on its environment, and cries out against the power that beats it down. At least such was this young deacon's state of mind as in mockery of self he hummed Kipling's ditty:

“A great and glorious thing it is  
To learn for seven years or so  
The Lord knows what of that or this  
Ere reckoned fit to face the foe—  
The flying bullet down the Pass  
That whistles clear, ‘All flesh is grass.’”

As the deacon moved restlessly in his chair, his eye rested a moment upon a pipe-rack on the wall. One pipe dyed black at the joints of its root-stem and with half its bowl hammered away, especially seemed to beckon him. With a laugh the deacon got up from his chair. “The sunshine may be

## 18      **In the Service of the King**

bottled in the pipe," he said, "and the doctor must take his own medicine."

Never shipwrecked sailor, strapped to a broken spar and drifting on unknown seas, felt farther away from help and inspiration than did the deacon when he reached out for his pipe. The pipe-rack was above his desk, and lying open on his desk was a life of the Master. The book had been lying there since he put it down days before to start on his rounds. Wholly by accident, if you will, his eye caught the caption of the chapter yet unread. It was "The Galilean Ministry." He stared at the words printed there till their meaning seemed to burn itself into his brain. Then, speaking aloud and calling himself by name, he said: "You contemptible little puppy!" The pipe was left untouched, and with vision cleared by the flashlight of those words he had read, the deacon sat down to think.

The Galilean Ministry! The King spending His life and doing His work in Galilee among the rude peasants whose quaint rusticisms made the dwellers in the capital city smile! The King making His home in Nazareth, and for all but a few months of His matchless life left to hold a little post up in the hills away from the high-road! The King in Galilee, and a green young subaltern

whining because he had been sent for a little while to guard the outer line of the city itself! The King in Galilee, separated by days of weary foot travel from the city of His love, and the young subaltern whimpering like a lost child because two hours of comfortable travel on train stood between him and the centre of the cleanest and sweetest resultant of that civilization He gave to the world!

It was as if the King Himself had spoken to him. Utterly ashamed, and humbled, as if he had read in the King's face sad rebuke of his disloyalty, the deacon set his teeth to face the facts. He had volunteered to serve and he had failed, not because the task was too hard, but because of his own foolish conceit and desire to do his work before the eyes of men.

It was a sad house-cleaning, but it was thoroughly done, and when the last hiding-place had been made to give up its dirt, and the sunlight was pouring in at every window, the man himself knew that somehow the sunlight had got into his own soul.

This much he knows, that from that illuminating hour the restless fretting has gone out of his life. When the prizes of life are given and none comes his way; when the names of those honoured in

## 20      **In the Service of the King**

action are printed in the gazette and his name does not appear; though the momentary sense of emptiness may come as aforetime, it does not linger; and with head erect he goes back to his task, whispering, "I have seen the King." Sometimes he is afraid that the blessing may itself bring a blight, for the memory of that radiant hour when the King met him in the quiet by-path of life tempts him to think lightly of the service of those who seek Him amidst the hurrying crowds of the great city.

The time had come for the deacon to be ordained presbyter. The period of his novitiate had been spent far from the eyes of his superior officers in the Church. He knew few of the clergy. A large district, almost a whole county, had been turned over to him when he was a mere fledgling; and for a year he had fluttered about, passing through every stage of awkwardness ere he found the use of his wings. He had learned in books a theory of the Church. He cherished in his imagination the ideal of the nurturing mother, never forgetful of her children, no matter how distant or how scattered; but he found it difficult to reconcile his ideal with the facts. But for the episcopal visitation and the quarterly remittance from the Diocesan Missionary Society, he might

have been tempted to think that he and his people were unknown or forgotten members of the great family of God.

If the deacon in the missionary districts of the diocese could have brought home to him that his task is one committed to him by the Church; that loyalty is due to the Church as well as to his people; that the Church is watching every struggle of her young lieutenant as the general government watches the affairs of a provincial district which it has committed to a commissioned officer; and if his office were fully recognized as conferring only a delegated power, and it were an accepted fact that the Church held herself responsible for him and for his people, then, and then only, would the sense of loyalty to the Church be born in the deacon. How can loyalty to the Church, which he knows only as a book theory, be a motive to an untried youth in the time of his inexperience? An episcopal sermon once a year and a quarterly remittance are not sufficient for these things.

Never will the parson, as we shall have to call him now, forget the first time that he was called upon to give some account of the field in which he had been at work for over two years. He was attending a missionary gathering held in a city

## 22      **In the Service of the King**

remote from his home. When asked what was the greatest need in his mission field, he startled his women questioners by replying: "A missionary cook." They thought him a jester and frowned disapproval. Their astonishment was not lessened when he produced a biscuit, which he asked them to examine. It was almost green in colour. "This," he said, "is the food of my people, and it is not Christian food. Over half the women in the insane asylum in a neighbouring State are farmers' wives, suffering from melancholia; and the superintendent assures me that their infirmity is due to eating bad bread. The woman who could teach my people how to make decent bread on an open fire, and eradicate a pernicious culinary heresy known as 'fry,' would win sainthood, and her grave would become a shrine. But that woman would have to be endowed with apostolic common-sense, and must have received the unction of tact; for the saddest feature of the condition I have depicted is that my people think their way the best way in the world. The poor woman who made that biscuit told me herself that she was a born cook. Her husband beats her, but alas! finds no fault with her cooking. He has never known any better."

Of course the parson was not understood. One

lady, whose paper was crowded out, declared with scarcely concealed scorn that the missionary society had better change itself into a cooking school, and another suggested that they should get someone to go up to the parson's parish and deliver a series of lectures on cooking.

His friends joked the parson about his biscuit speech, and he replied good-naturedly: "Oh, I can wait fifty years. I have no administrative capacity, or I'd get the thing done myself. I have spent two years studying conditions and I have mastered the facts. All I can do is to present those facts. When enough people have accumulated like facts, then the argument will be unanswerable and the change will come."

The little town had not wholly outgrown the habits of village days, and men still met on winter afternoons around the stove in some of the stores to smoke and gossip. One of the favourite haunts was the hardware shop of one of the vestrymen. Here the philosophers of the village store held high debate, and the parson was a frequent visitor. His contribution to the argument was generally an anecdote, but when the laugh had subsided, the conviction he wished to carry was often thrust home.

One rainy afternoon the crowd around the stove



## 24      In the Service of the King

was rather larger than usual, though the presence of one man frequently introduced a discordant note. He was a big, rough, boisterous man, who had no gift of listening and would tolerate no conversation in which he had no part. He was notoriously irreverent and had the air of a bully. Everybody knew that there were some dark chapters in his life. He had done deeds of ruthless daring, prompted more, perhaps, by an utter disregard of consequence than from any deep-seated viciousness. He was tolerated only because he could not be suppressed without an actual conflict—and so he enjoyed that measure of immunity which comes to every man who in the public mind is labelled dangerous. He tried to draw the parson into a theological discussion in order, as was evident, to parade his own reckless disregard of sacred things. The parson skilfully avoided being enticed into such a discussion till the man said, with a sneer: "You know you are in the preaching business for what you can get out of it, and would sell out if you could get your price. It's my creed that every man has his price."

It was an insult, and every man present was watching the parson eagerly. He was perfectly calm, though his left hand clutched his pipe a little tighter and his "talking finger," as the fellows

used to call it at college, was extended and rigid. His words cut the air like a whip lash: "Your creed, sir, proves nothing but that you are personally dishonest. If, in your opinion, every man has his price, you must be the single exception in the whole world, or you are a self-confessed thief; and unless you can prove that you are the one exception, your word, much less your opinion, would not be received even in a police court."

The parson thought he knew his man, and even while he was speaking, he was wondering what his face was going to look like when the bully's big fist had smashed it. But the man merely gazed at him open-mouthed. He had wished to test the parson's mettle, but he had not expected such a broadside. When he did speak it was in a very earnest tone: "Man, do you talk to your people like that? If you do, I'll come to hear you."

"I have never before," said the parson, "been forced to tell the truth so harshly, but my aim is to tell my people what I hold to be true at any cost. I am sorry, gentlemen," he went on, "to break in on our talk with a sermon, but the very name of manhood has been blasphemed." And then he began to talk. Sitting there on a nail keg, pipe in hand still, he pleaded with them never to lose faith in man, "the lowest depth of infidel-

ity," he called it. "When a man," he continued, "flings away his trust in man, it is a sign that he has already flung away his faith in God. This place, men, is sacred. We are surrounded by carpenters' tools. Every hammer and saw here cries out against the blasphemy of an utterly corrupt humanity. The Carpenter of Nazareth was no bungler, and He built His Kingdom on His trust in redeemed manhood."

The parson talked a long time. It was a strange place for a sermon; and some of his listeners heard one for the first time in many years. Every pipe was out when he finished, and an old fellow sitting on the counter drew a deep breath and said to the parson: "I'd give a horse if my son could have heard you."

The crowd broke up then, but ever after that the bully was the parson's sworn defender. His delight was to tell how the parson had called him a thief, and proved it. The parson's talk had cut deep into more than one life, and the bully rather plumed himself on being the occasion of it.

The parson was a hard student, and his working desk looked more like a college professor's than like that of a village minister. He read in a curious fashion, arguing with every author, writing all over the margins, and sometimes he wrote a

treatise while reading one. The village doctor was his chum, and once, after midnight, the doctor, returning from the bedside of a sick man, saw the light burning in the study, and walked in. He found the parson deep in an old volume and asked what he was up to. "Robbing a grave," was the answer. "Here is a book great enough to mark an epoch, and I'll wager it hasn't been read twice in twenty years. It is one of the best ways to teach truth, but the old prophet prophesied to his generation in an unknown tongue. He called his book, *Methodological Propædeutic*. He was buried under the weight of that awful title, and here am I, as happy as a whole tribe of Esquimaux when they come across the frozen carcass of a primeval mammoth. There is enough meat in this old volume to run a theological mess-room for a year."

"See here," said the doctor, "you have got to explain to me how it is that you are buried here in this little hollow of the world. Why don't you go to a larger field of labour?"

"I have had no temptation to leave, for no other church has ever asked for me. The fact is, 'Doc,' I am not considered safe," replied the parson.

"What do you mean by safe?" asked the doctor.

"Oh I suppose," answered the parson, "the use

of the word 'safe' is the same when applied to a parson as when applied to a horse. A safe horse is a horse any lady can drive.

"It seems to worry you, old chap, that I am not a successful preacher. Fill up your pipe, and if you can keep your eyes open long enough, perhaps I may be able to give you at least a partial explanation of it. I am, I fear, a most uncomfortable person to have about. For the life of me, I can't help disturbing the spirit of worship, that sweet calm when people are supposed to drink in truth by atmospheric inhalation.

"On last Sunday I preached in a city church, and the congregation, accustomed to the deliberate movements of their old rector's mind, were evidently very restless under, what seemed to them, the dangerous novelty of my teaching. I have, I am told, an unfortunate habit of changing the application of accepted terms. I commenced my sermon by stating that my subject was 'Vestments and Ritual.' Instantly the people were alert with interest, an interest that passed into dazed wonderment when I added: 'I do not mean by that, that I am going to talk about clothes and posture and forms of words, for I know no authority on such subjects, but about character and actions, which are the divinely ordained vestments

and ritual of the Christian Church.' If it hadn't been for the fact that I saw in the congregation a keen-eyed old lady, whose face, hid away under a poke bonnet, showed that she understood what I was talking about, I do not think I could have kept on.

"The average church-goer looks at time and eternity from a certain fixed angle of mental vision. To accept the suggestion to change his point of view would disturb him as much as to make him give up his particular nook in the corner of the family pew. To demand that the truth be left untrammelled by maxims that fetter or watch-words that blind, is as revolutionary to many minds as to suggest to a pew-holding congregation that the church be made free. In each case, the pleasant sense of the blessed fixedness of things would be destroyed. 'If truth be left free,' says one, 'she might wander far ahead of me, and I should either have to be content to be left behind or gird up my loins and follow after. I am too old to change. Fetter the truth and she stays by you.' 'If the church be made free,' says another, 'why, any stranger has as much right to my pew in God's house as I have; and for me to sit where my father sat would necessitate my being always on time, and this is not always convenient. Family

pews give a tone to a church that nothing else can give.' When you tell him that the family pew did as much as any single cause to alienate the masses and to destroy the Colonial Church, he sniffs and turns away, and ever afterwards thinks you a dangerous young man."

"What surprises me," said the doctor, "is that obnoxious optimism of yours. When you get hold of what you call a truth, you would button-hole anybody to tell him the good news. You are a veritable gossip in the matter. A rebuff like that you have just described would cure me of the belief that truth would win out at last. If men reject with scorn what is to you a patent truth, what makes you think it worth while to keep on offering them the thing they don't want? Where did you learn this trick of optimism anyhow?"

"I came across it years ago," replied the parson, "in a life of Keppler. When the scientists of Keppler's day ridiculed his discovery of the law of the heavenly bodies, Keppler smiled and said: 'If God has waited six thousand years to let Keppler know, then surely Keppler can wait a generation.' "

The parson's mother used to say that she had sent five sons to college in search of knowledge, but if they found it they never shared it with the

women folk at home; that the single item of knowledge she had been able to abstract from any one of them was, that if a spoon be placed in a cup you could pour in boiling water without running the risk of cracking the china. The parson furnished that item, it being the single fact that remained over and above the amount of information he had given back to the university when he had handed in his graduation paper on chemistry.

The only way in which he can account for the fact that this bit of knowledge remained with him, was that it was given as a kindly word of caution and not "in the course." It is a strange fact that everything in the course, being held in memory by the fixed effort of the will, till returned to the professor and receipted for on a sheep-skin, promptly disappeared from his mind never to come back. The things he once knew best, he knows now not at all; and he is conscious that in his brain there are spots, now permanently barren, where the highest-priced knowledge obtainable once flourished for a season. The parson had been a student for thirty odd years. Half that period was spent not in tutelage, but in serfdom. Even now, when he has been out of school almost as long as he was in it, the form which the night-



## 32      **In the Service of the King**

mare most frequently takes is the inquisitorial agony of the examination room.

The parson is persuaded that the ordinary diploma is nothing more or less than an honourable discharge from the ranks of learning on account of permanent disabilities.

College culture is something like South American patriotism. Everybody has heard the story of Castro's recruiting sergeant who wrote back to the commander from the field of his operations: "I send you one hundred volunteers. Please return the handcuffs."

But 'tis a far cry from teacups to Venezuela, and the parson must leave the contemplation of the sheepskin and return to his mutton. What he wanted to say was, that two occasions in his college and seminary days stand out in memory. They are the fixed stars by which he still steers his craft. One day, in the physical laboratory, dear old Frank Smith, having placed a number of apparatus, told the class the nature of the experiment he was about to make. He explained the law of physics to be exemplified, and then proceeded.

To the infinite delight of the class, the result prophesied did not actualize. They expected to see in the professor the evidence of chagrin at the failure; and were puzzled when he, after repeating

the experiment with the same result, looked up, and with a face all aglow with excitement, said exultantly: "Men, the accepted law does not work in this case. We are confronted by a difficulty, and in science, as in life, every difficulty is a door. We are standing at a locked door in the great house of knowledge. No man has ever entered it, and no man can tell what a wealth of good things lies behind this closed door. I want every man here to join me in the search for the key that will unlock this difficulty."

Forgotten forever is the great mass of facts gathered with burning eyes and aching brain in that class, but fresh as if it all happened yesterday is the memory of the eager face of the teacher as he stood there in the presence of a new difficulty.

The other incident belongs to a later date. The parson had gone to the seminary with one equipment at least. The training of sixteen years in the schoolroom had taught him how to study. The habit of sticking to a task till the problem was solved was fixed. He soon found that the old struggles in the college curriculum were but as a mimic contest compared with the forces at work in the field of theology. Here he must fight with all his might for the very warrant of the calling he had chosen. Needless to say that he was soon

## 34      **In the Service of the King**

entangled in the mesh of conflicting creeds. Like many another, he found that the harder he struggled the tighter the cords were drawn.

Convinced that he could never unravel the tangled skein of thought without help, he sought the counsel of an aged professor. The memory of that interview is painful still. For the first time, he came in conflict with the pious agnosticism of the old evangelical school of thought, which made mystery the sanction of religion. He was told that the question he wanted answered was a dangerous one, and that the only thing to do was to stop thinking about it. He persisted in his request for literature on the subject, and was met by the reply that the professor knew no safe books on that theme, and again was told to stop thinking and the doubt would die. With a burst of youthful pride, the boy replied: "I don't intend to think about anything else until I find an answer to my question."

The months that followed were trying ones. The doubt was there. The professor had told him that it was a third-century heresy. To harbour that doubt seemed a grievous disloyalty to the Church of his birth and of his love; but to stop thinking, to run away from the first difficulty, this he knew to be disloyal to the King Himself.

One day he sat in the class-room, listening to a new teacher. One of the class, startled by the bold utterance of the teacher, asked: "Is not that position dangerous?" Instantly a change came over the teacher. Several times during the hour the irrepressible humour of the professor had shown itself, but there was prophetic earnestness in the hushed tones of the voice that answered: "Dangerous! Suppose it is dangerous, what of it? Men, you must understand that man was made for the truth, and becomes truly a man only in the seeking of the truth. Seek for it, men. Follow it, no matter where it leads. Seek it earnestly, honestly, reverently; and you may know that the voice that calls you onward is the voice of God. The way to it may be difficult; keep on. You may grope for years in the fog of doubt, but don't give up the search. You may go down, at last, in the bog of despair, but my word for it, if your search has been earnest, honest, and reverent, God Himself will have sunk you in that bog; sunk you there, that some man more fitted for the God-appointed task, but helpless without the marks of your footprints in the way, may in that bog find a foothold on your sunken body. He will carry the line over what will mark the opening of a new highway to the city of the living God, but

### 36      **In the Service of the King**

you, no less than he, will be honoured of Him Who doeth all things well."

To one of the class, at least, these words meant the gift of life itself. Somewhere in his brain or heart the last fetter that bound him to the dead letter snapped, and he knew that he was free. He could hardly keep back the cheer that surged up to his lips. Here was one to whom he could go for counsel. He did go, and step by step the heights of vision were climbed. 'Tis true that at the end the truth grasped was but an elementary tenet of the faith; but the hold of that truth upon him drew from him not the mere homage to the form of sound words, but the love that a man bears to his living child, for whom he would die in the exultant joy of willing sacrifice.

### III

IN those first years the parson was conscious all along of an intellectual loneliness. In the thrifty little village there were plenty of men of shrewd business sense, and more than one with a keen native sense of humour, but not a student among them. The parson had been at school since his sixth year. Every friendship of life was associated with the class-room. Every thought of his life he had shared with these friends as naturally as he shared his lunch at school or his purse at college. Here in the village this sweet commerce of the mind was stayed, and he felt its loss keenly. He smiles now, as he thinks of the first convocation he attended. He must have impressed his brethren of the cloth as a young madman. He button-holed every one of them and poured into their ears the pent-up thoughts of many lonely months. He bombarded them with questions as rapidly as the child at the fair pelts the tired parent with inquiries. For the most part they listened patiently enough, but answered:

### 38      In the Service of the King

"I have not thought of such questions for years. I have not time for the study of such things." One dear old minister whose convocation sermon was written in the language of a bygone age, but whose heart was big with love and whose Christian life found a fit vehicle in a robust manhood, looked at his eager young brother in a dazed sort of way and said: "What is the use of going over all that ground again? I accepted all that before I entered the ministry. To investigate it now would mean that I had begun to doubt it, and I never had a doubt in my life."

The parson went back to his home puzzled and troubled. Had he somehow missed the way, and was he wandering in forbidden fields? Men whose Christian life was eloquent of the Spirit's power within had smiled at his enthusiasm and talked of the study of the deep things of God as something for which they found no time. The Atonement, on the meaning of which he had pondered many a night till the clock registered the beginning of another day, these men had defined in the fixed phraseology of an old text-book long out of print. They had talked of it as a single isolated fact in time, whereas to the parson's mind it was interwoven with the texture of human life in such a way that he caught a glimpse of it in the flush of

shame that mantled a boy's face when he pleaded with him to make his life a cleaner thing; and he saw it flash in the dulled eye of age when he reminded them that they were but little children in the nursery of God, and that He could redeem their wasted lives in that eternal life begun here in which death is only an incident.

When the parson attended his first meeting of the council, he was greeted affectionately by his friend who had never had a doubt. He put his arms about the parson and said: "I have been praying for you, boy." The parson thanked him, but the anxious look in his friend's eye prompted the parson to ask the meaning of his anxiety. The reply gave him food for thought: "I am afraid for you, boy. You study too much. You ask too many questions; and questions are dangerous things for the minister." It was in vain that the parson sought to extract from the other any reason for supposing that any moral obliquity lurked in the desire to know. It was in vain that he protested that fear was to him a form of infidelity. It was in vain that he declared he saw little difference in the attitude of mind of one who said, "You must not ask," and of one who said, "You cannot know." His friend only answered: "It is dangerous and I am afraid for you."



## 40      In the Service of the King

It was only when the parson added, "I never open a new book or start in search of fuller knowledge of God, without asking the King for the teaching light of the Holy Spirit on the way," that the anxious look grew less, and even then his friend went away saddened that a minister of the Church should cherish the restless desire to know more than the unexplored facts that he had accepted when he took his ordination vows.

Browsing in strange pastures, the parson had stumbled on a phrase of George Fox's that summed up his unformulated philosophy: "A minister must preach to the condition of his people." The application of this principle forced him one Sunday morning to choose a strange theme for a sermon. It was in one of his country churches, and the time was one of great agricultural depression. The congregation were all country folk, and tobacco was the one money crop of them all. The sale of the tobacco was the crowning event of the year. New dresses, the children's clothes, the much-needed mule, the sewing-machine, and the new plough, were all to be got "after the tobacco was sold."

It was Sunday, October 3d. On the Friday before, he had driven twenty miles across his parish through fields of growing tobacco. Fortune had

smiled upon the farmer, and the discouragement of a late spring had been forgotten in the promise of the summer. It was the best crop for years. Friday night the wind shifted and died away. A heavy frost fell, and when the farmer awoke on Saturday he looked out upon waste fields. In a single night the toil of all the year had been made futile. Not a stalk reared its head. The frost, like some awful curse, had smitten all; and as every man looked out across his desolated fields, the spectres of the mortgage on the old home, and the unpaid bill for fertilizer, walked down the tobacco rows and mocked him in his grief. The parson had never before, and has never since, looked into faces like those in the pews that morning. The women, whose labours in the dairy and with the fowls had earned the money to pay the help, felt the blight as much as the men; and in their eyes was the look of patient helplessness that we sometimes see in the eyes of a desperately wounded animal. The men sat there cowed. For the time they had ceased to struggle. On the face of most of them was the stubble of a week's growth of beard. To-day for the first time since a boy the Sunday shave had been omitted. The listless hands would not do their work.

The parson was still a fledgling, and the care-

## 42      In the Service of the King

fully prepared sermon was being carried in his brain as the child balances a full pail upon its head. He read his text and got through a few sentences. Then the awful mockery of it all mastered him. Here were these poor, desolate children of the Father, come to His house as the one refuge from despair, and the steward of His mysteries was offering them stones for bread. As one who frees himself from fetters, the parson flung his text away, and blurted out: "I can't do it; there is but one theme for to-day. I am going to preach to you about frost-bitten tobacco," and he did. God gave him power to lift the veil, and they saw His face.

Before he finished the sermon, the parson and his people were weeping together, and one poor fellow, the tiler to whose home the frost had taken from him, was sobbing like a child. Is it any wonder that every year, when the first frost is on the fields, the memory of that hour, when like little children we brought our hurts to God and sobbed out our pain at His knees, comes back to us all? Is it any wonder that when the parson went back to his books, and studied the works of the great masters, wherein is written much on the Problem of Pain, he found the way a little less dark, and saw a gleam that beckoned to the

edge of the waste? It was during these days that the parson became conscious of a hidden disloyalty in his soul. In spite of many discouragements, his life was a happy one. He was the son in many homes, and his people made him rich with the gift of love; but at one season of the year he was wretched. The time of the bishop's visitation was a yearly agony. The Sunday-schools were small, the congregations a fixed quantity, and former ministers had gleaned the homes for the confirmation class. A year's preaching, and when the bishop came; one shy girl, perhaps, of whose spiritual life the parson could know but little, would, through her mother, give in her name. In vain he preached in frenzied zeal. The power of the initiative was gone in the few old men whose names were not on the church list, and his appeals were unintelligible. Again and again he was tempted to urge some untutored ones to take a step whose meaning they did not grasp, but something stayed him. He who often said to himself that he was not afraid of any man, found himself ashamed to face the kindly inquiry of the old bishop at his coming; but bad as this was, it did not compare with the dread of that moment when the bishop would read his report in council, and the parson would hear him say: "Visited the five

## 44      In the Service of the King

churches in —— county, and confirmed three." He would be put to shame before his brethren and branded as an incompetent.

Every year after the bishop's visit he felt degraded, not at his failure, but at the way he took his failure. So one day he made up his mind to have it out with the King; to pray for the purging of the soul that would make him a man again. It was then that he found he was harbouring a pernicious heresy, not that he minded being a heretic, for he had found out before this that every man who does his work in solitary places is, perforce, a heretic; for loneliness breeds strange fancies; but here was a heresy that the King Himself had condemned. It was the heresy of numbers. Again and again He had winnowed the crowd in search of the true ones. In the end He had gathered but a handful; but they were the good seed, like Himself, the living Word.

Little by little the truth came to the parson; the truth that is now so apparent that he wonders it was not always his. The truth is this, that the Church, and not the preacher, is the converting power. The preacher's word can help only to interpret his own life and hope, and it is his life that counts. If he fails to quicken the souls of the members of the Church, he has failed utterly,

for the Church is to do the work, not he. The parson's friends still smile when they recall to him the fervour with which he preached to them what was to him a new truth. They called him a dreamer, because he learned to be content with the few faithful ones. A learned judge gave him fatherly counsel, telling him that he was over-reaching the mark, and setting the standard too high for the man outside the Church. The judge has never yet understood the parson's answer: "I am not preaching to the man outside, for I have no desire to start an argument with such a one. I am preaching to the faithful forty, for if they and I together can interpret Christ in our lives, there will be no room for argument. The man outside must believe."

One of the sweetest memories of those days is of the presence of two old negroes, a man and his wife, at every service of the church. Old Ben had been the body-servant of one of the vestry. When his former master's health gave way and it was plain to all that the end was near, Ben came to him and said: "Master, I'se been a Baptist all my life, but you and me ain't got long to live now, and I'd like to jine your church before I die. Somehow I feel it would keep me near you always." So much in earnest was the old man that when

46      **In the Service of the King**

the bishop came he was confirmed, and the church knew no more devout soul than the old servant. His master died, but Ben was faithful to his master's church. On Communion Sunday he and his wife waited till all the rest of the congregation had been to the Holy Table, and then they would come up together and kneel on the floor several feet away from the chancel rail. No persuasion could bring them nearer. The picture of those two kneeling figures is burnt into the parson's brain. Types of a suppliant race, recognizing the gulf between the races, and yet wanting to be near the more favoured ones always.

Old Betsy had followed her husband into the church, and she was very proud of her membership, but the habits of her earlier training still clung to her, and from the back pew where she sat she would give audible approbation of the parson's preaching. Her earnestness deepened with the earnestness of the appeal, and there was a crescendo of "Dat's so," "Yes, Lord," that never failed to be heard. The people grew accustomed to it, and it provoked no smile. Old Betsy's contribution to the maintenance of the church consisted in "washing the preacher's circus."

## THE TOWN MINISTRY

### I

ONE Sunday morning the parson was sitting at his desk reading over the notes of his sermon, when he saw two men coming down the street toward the church. It needed no second glance to tell him that they were strangers; for even if he had not known the whole male population of the village, their air of curiosity in unfamiliar surroundings would have told the story. They paused for a moment just before they reached the church, and then one of them went into the building, while the other remained outside. When the parson entered, he saw the two men sitting on opposite sides of the church, and he knew that he was being investigated by a committee. Such things have to be, perhaps; but if other parsons feel the humiliation of such an ordeal as did the parson of this story, then this method can be quoted to justify the cruder methods of the Inquisition. Many times since then the parson has



48      **In the Service of the King**

noticed the vestry committee in the congregation. They always sit apart, and they always time the sermon. Time and the oft-repeated experience ought to have taught him patience, but even to this day he finds it hard to ignore the presence of these sermon tasters. Only a short time since he found them lying in wait. Their air was critical, and as the parson's colloquial speech touched upon the commonplace things of daily life, the tired look of disappointed seekers settled upon them. It was then that the parson came near to making history. He was trying to minister to his people, to quicken the feeble interest of some spent life, to hearten the patient burden-bearer whose strength was almost gone, to force the bitter medicine of unwelcome truth through the set lips of the wilful one whose soul was sick unto death, to pour the balm on the bruised one who shrank even from the healing touch, to awaken the sluggish young soldier to a living loyalty; and here were these two critics, counting the minutes and measuring the pitch and volume of his tones. He paused and flung up his head, and was silent for a little while. It was an awkward moment for the congregation, for the parson seemed to have forgotten his theme. He was searching through his quiver for some straight

Saxon words that would carry true. He was going to ask that committee to leave, and leave at once. He had found the words, and his lips were framed to speak them. But even as the taut string was being set free, the grip of the old guest law of his people, who for three centuries had lived along the James, held him. After all, they were guests, and besides, it was the Father's house, not his. He never heard from the committee, nor does the stately warden of a great church know how near he was to being kicked by a restless young colt.

But this is recent history, and we left the parson being investigated for the first time. Those two must have been tired with the journey, and have slept peacefully through the sermon, for the parson was called to their church. It was at this time that the parson first came in contact with that popular fallacy known as the "larger field." He was told—and he told himself—that here was a summons to a larger field. The appeal of the crowd is like the appeal of the abyss. The man looks down and finds immensity beneath him instead of above him; and he can make this immensity his own by just letting go. It is a sort of inverted and degenerate aspiration.

Well, the parson, like many a better man, let go, and chose the larger field. Whatever blessings

have come to him—and they have been many—he knows he has missed the joy of conquest that might have been his, had he not given up that first work. The field he left is still unconquered territory, and awaits the coming of one whose loyalty to the cause no heresy of numbers can shake; who knows that promotion in the King's service is ever to the harder task and not to the larger field; who welcomes the command to attempt the impossible, for he knows that the King Himself keeps near to those who are commissioned to find a way.

The incidents of the move to town bring a smile as he recalls them now, but they were almost tragic in their enactment—the long journey in a day coach, the aching sense of being a deserter, the anxiety for the wife who had done the work of three men in gathering the few but cumbersome belongings of the household, and in the last hours before leaving been hostess to a crowd of country friends, and presided at an impromptu but extensive repast spread upon trunks and packing boxes. The stove had never a chance to cool, so they left it. The quaint old negro cook, who had elected to follow the fortunes of her mistress, and who was already desperately homesick and looking very woe-begone in her nurse's cap, which set

awry upon the bushy wig—the cook's chief treasure—carefully combed out and up for the journey. It was a dishevelled band of adventurers that got off the train at ten o'clock at night. The poisoned air of a close and overheated car had dulled the brain. Clothes and hands and face were marked with the dust of travel. The baby, wakened in the effort to put on its wraps, was voicing its treble protest. As they blinked in the light of the station lamps, they found themselves thrust into a waiting carriage, and were driven to the rectory. Every window was ablaze with light, and, as the carriage stopped, the door opened and showed the crowd within. The whole congregation, men and women, had gathered to welcome the parson and his family. If this narrative should come under a woman's eye, she may be able to understand the wife's state of mind, as she clutched the parson's hand and gasped: "I don't believe it. This is too horrible to be true." The parson, who, long hours before, had lost any power to feel, could only reply: "It is unbelievable; but unless they have put us out at the wrong house we have got to face it." With a grim tightening of the muscles, the wife's head went up, and the parson knew she meant to die game. For one hour she faced the ordeal of many eyes.

## 52      **In the Service of the King**

Travel-stained and spent, in the midst of those in evening dress, she fought the unequal fight, and won. None but the parson's ear could detect, beneath the laughter and the play of words, the note that told him every nerve was raw and the tension stretched to snapping. It was over, at last, and the house that was to be their home for thirteen years was left to them.

As the parson looks back upon those years, he feels as if, from a point outside of life, he were looking at himself. He believes more firmly now than when he uttered it, the paradox of his farewell to his people: "You are going away and I shall stay here. All that is best in me has been given to you; and what I am, you have helped to make. The lessons you have taught me I shall try to teach those in the city; and my life and all its meaning is the trust I leave with you."

This town must ever be, in the truest sense, his home; for here his children were born; here sorrow led him into the undiscovered country and taught him a new language, stripping life of every tinsel trapping and, in the presence of his dead, showing him the true values. It was here he learned the phrase, which his friends say he has used so often that it is peculiarly his own: "The worth-whiles of life."

The parson soon found the larger field to which he had come was an illusion. The church building was larger; the choir a real joy; but the congregation a fixed quantity from the beginning. The town had been visited again and again by the travelling evangelist, and every man, woman, and child drawn at some time into the religious vortex. There were few unattached people in the town, and the tribal spirit was strong. A man must do his work within the tribe of his birth or choice. The parson faced the situation squarely. He had no intention of deserting again. He was going to serve the King here. Did this mean that for the rest of his life he was to minister to a church of one hundred and fifty members, that could be added to only by birth, or the occasional recruit, bringing a letter of transfer? He had no taste or talent for proselytizing. Was this, then, the end toward which his struggles and strivings had brought him—to preach to that little band for the rest of his life? His world shrank to a prison house. He was rector of a church, and suddenly he felt that this title did not define his duties to his King. It shut him up in a world smaller than that in which the King moved. He knew that some new truth was coming into his life, for he had become conscious of a great need; and, even in

## 54      In the Service of the King

those days, he had learned to call his doubts and dissatisfactions his "growing pains." While he tarried for the vision, which he knew would come, he began to make some spiritual experiments. They seemed to him to be in a way distinctly clerical extras. He was the rector of a church, but he would try to be the King's minister to that community. The other ministers in the town, guarding their tribal interests, were also in the service of the King, and he would know them, not casually, but intimately. If he believed he had a message from the King to men and was debarred from delivering it, because he could not speak the language of the tribe, then he would seek out the prophet of the tribe and convince him that there was a message from the King, and persuade that prophet to deliver it to his own tribe.

Memory takes him back to that night when, on a street corner in the rain, he pleaded with the haruspex of a hostile tribe to climb with him the hill of vision. "Let me lend you a book that will show you what I am driving at," said the parson. "To what Church does the author belong?" asked the haruspex. The parson replied that he did not know, or care. The haruspex seemed utterly astonished, and asked: "Do you mean to say that you would read a book without knowing

the Church affiliation of the author?" The parson answered: "If a turbaned Turk should bring me a message of truth, I should know he came to me from the Most High God. God chooses His messengers; not I." As one ashamed, the haruspex promised to come and get the book. This was the beginning of a new life for that man. Truth became something to win and to share; not a labelled treasure-box which he was set to guard. The parson began to take courage. He had filed through a captive's fetters and set a strong man free. He had done more—he had stumbled upon a basis of unity. It had been there all the time, but unrecognized. It was the assumption that every man who calls himself a Christian is in the service of the King, and loyalty to the King demanded that he help the helper. This assumption has found him fighting in strange company—Russellite, Roman priest, Baptist preacher, Christian Scientist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and the doughty street warriors—the parson has talked of our King and His cause to all of them. He has cut the bitter word from the manuscript of a theological disputant, saying: "I don't think your theology is right, but I am not responsible for that. I know the bitterness of your invective is hurtful to the Cause and, as a fellow-soldier, I



## 56      In the Service of the King

protest." He has claimed their Christ as his own Christ, and talked of the common Cause. He has never tried to make an Episcopalian out of any one of them, but he has never failed to try to share every truth that has come to him as a member of the Church, as freely and as eagerly as vedette whispers to vedette the meaning of the noises and lights in the camp of the enemy. He has avoided as a plague-stricken district the field of religious controversy, and talked ever of the King's business. So long as he could keep the King the centre of interest, the question as to which of them should be greatest could not arise. He was the rector of a church, but neither a book nor a stately ritual could ever interpret the Church to that town, for they would not read the book, nor witness the ritual, and he was determined to make the Church a power in that community. The only possible interpreter of its spirit must be a life of depth, of breadth, of freedom, and of tolerance. He determined to bring the Church out-of-doors, and see if it could speak the common speech of men without the aid of printed book or chanted music. Consciously and persistently he strove to share what God had given him. He preached during those thirteen years nearly two thousand sermons to the little band of Episcopalians

gathered in the church building; but he talked of the King and service under Him to every man of every tribe who would give him a hearing. The derringer talks in the drug store were a part of the day's work, and he has listened to the confession of a sin-stricken soul as he sat in a boat waiting for the fish to bite.

But it was not all sunshine. Many a day the hands hung listless and the doubt would come—settling down like a fog and making his world again a narrow, chill prison. He longed at times to get out of it all, and in the big city take a part in the big battle there; but every time he went to the city and talked to ministers there, he came away dazed. They had neither time for the study of the big problems, nor apparent interest in the challenge to battle that was flaunted by vice at every turn of the head. One and all, they seemed to be intent on one thing—to save the Church. The parson's brain got into a strange muddle. Was he mistaken about the meaning of all the battle talk and soldier speech in the history of the founding of the Kingdom? Was he mistaken as to what was the glory of an army. He had never gotten over the impression of what it was to be a real soldier that he had got from an old, yellow letter that the mother once gave him to read.

## 58      In the Service of the King

It was from her brother, a boy soldier in the Confederacy, and was written from the Wilderness. "I have not taken off my boots in a fortnight. We have been in seventeen fights and skirmishes between the Maryland line and Spottsylvania Court House; and yesterday, only the sergeant and myself answered to our names when the roll of Company F was called. The rest are dead, or captured." A thousand times, through his boyhood and young manhood, the parson had pictured the glory of being a member of that Company F. He always pitied the two survivors. They had been saved, and, somehow, it seemed to cast a stain upon the record of the company. Was the Church organized to save itself? This question came to him again and again.

It was during these days that the parson became a fisherman. At first, fishing was only an occasional break in the routine of life, but gradually it became a passion. At first, he argued with himself that he needed the recreation. This argument sufficed, till he found that recreation and duty had a frequent struggle for precedence, and duty did not always take first place. Finally, he faced the matter squarely. He went fishing, not because he needed it, but because he loved it. If he took off too much time, it was dissipation. This truth

was pressed home sharply one day, as he was getting into his buggy to drive to the fish pond. The paddle and the bait bucket told the story of his intended outing. As he got to the gate, a poor old drunkard, whom he had a short time before inveigled out of a bar-room and helped to his home, was passing. As usual, he was well under the influence of liquor. He stopped the parson, and steadying himself by a grip on the parson's shoulder, he said: "Parson, I want to ask you a question. Every man has his weakness, hasn't he?" "Yes, I suppose he has," answered the parson. A drunken grin was on his face as the old fellow continued: "That's what I think. Every man has his weakness; I drink whiskey, but I don't go fishing. And you go fishing, but don't drink whiskey. I have my weakness and you have your weakness. It's about the same thing, isn't it?"

## II

THE parson spent too much time in fishing, perhaps; but his memory at least is unregenerate; for he looks back upon that time spent in fishing as among the golden hours of life. He learned to know the woods and waters. He knew every hole of mink and otter in many miles. He knew the hillside where the first arbutus bloomed. He violated the game laws by shooting muskrats by moonlight, and argued questions of theology with a fine old preacher of another Church, who was such an enthusiastic fisherman that he would put on a small hook and fish in the bait bucket while the bacon was being fried for dinner. The parson still contends that fishing is the one democratic sport. He likes fishing for the same reason that Pat likes a street fight. "I dearly love a street fight," said Patrick, "for in a street fight, one man is just as good as another, and sometimes a blamed sight better." He has prayed for all sorts and conditions of men, and fished with them, too; and he has seen a reprobate, whom no man

would trust for a quarter, turn the boat, so that the other fellow could get the best fishing. Such a man only lacked training and opportunity to become a hero.

There were many days when the parson seemed, even to himself, to be doing nothing at all. Certainly, there were no results that could be tabulated in the Diocesan Journal; though he strove to maintain the only ritual (the translation he found one day in Coleridge) that ever won his whole-hearted admiration; "Pure ritual and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." During the thirteen years of his ministry in town, sorrow came to almost every home of his people, and the closest ties of friendship that have bound his life to others were knit by the blind, groping hands of wounded love under the shadows of human loss. Whatever the mocker of God's plan may say, the fact remains that pain is the greatest builder in the world.

There were times when the frail humanity in him hungered for the word of commendation. Sometimes he craved, in spite of all that he had learned in bitterness of soul, to be able to say to all the world: "This has the King done through me." It was during these years that he learned

## 62      In the Service of the King

what he called "his lighthouse philosophy." The keeper of the lighthouse does not launch any ships, it is true, but he keeps many a good ship from going to wreck. The light shines farther than the keeper can see, and brightest when he cannot see at all. Two things he has got to remember—to keep the light burning, and never get in between the light and the darkness he is set to lighten. His teacher here was the one who had been the companion and counsellor of his youth. Men have given many names to their mothers. The parson called his mother "The Strawberry," for did not old Isaak Walton say: "God might have made a better fruit than the strawberry, but He just didn't?"

The best that is in the Saxon is a sense of justice, and the best that is in the Celt is his imperishable youth; and the mother was a Saxon-Celt. It was not until he was far enough away from it all to get the sense of proportion that he understood the meaning of those solemn moments in his boyhood, when the busy mother laid down her needle to sit as judge and arbiter. Sometimes, the tear-stained and angry litigants were all her own boys. Sometimes, the court was held in the backyard, and one of her boys, with flushed face and clenched fist, faced a playmate, whose sullen silence told

that he felt certain the judgment would be rendered by a biassed court. Sometimes, it was an angry dispute between her boys and a negro servant. It was as one against whom the verdict was often rendered that the parson got his first suggestion of life's hardest lesson: "Justice does not take sides with people; justice takes sides with right." There were two rulings of this court that often come to his mind: "Fight, if you must, but no sulking; better a bruised eye than a scowling face"; and "The punishment must ever be greater if the wrong has been done to a smaller boy, or to a servant whose menial position makes him defenceless." This was the Saxon in her. Whatever her sons may come to doubt, they know, for they have seen, the splendid majesty of justice. They must believe that right is right, and to be served, no matter what the cost to self.

But, after all, the Saxon's is a sombre world, and the mother's world was a world of light. Every Irishman has the power at will to make his eye a convex mirror, and see the world of common things reflected there in strange grotesque. This was the mother's gift. She taught her children to laugh, and led the laughter. So sure was she of the healing power of laughter that, even when sorrow's arrow struck deep and the wound did



## 64      In the Service of the King

inward bleed, the lips were never too hard set to keep back the smile; and, somehow, the Healer wrought the double miracle, for her own wound was staunch as she ministered to the smaller hurts of childhood's hour. The parson still calls her his encyclopædia of useless information, his last book of reference when all others fail him. It makes no difference whether the quest is the names of the three wives of Felix, or the name of the English general who wrote *Peccavi* when he captured Sind, he is sure the mother knows. People who have lived are a living interest to her; and she who would gossip about the possible domestic complications in Solomon's household resolutely refused to discuss her neighbour's affairs, on the ground that it was not yet a closed incident, and hence none of her business. A Spanish proverb, or a Latin pun, jumped suddenly into a discussion of the servant problem, making even that desolate waste blossom. When some one suggested to the old French teacher, worn out with labour and ill-health, that he should rest, the eager old man replied: "Rest? How can I rest? I have work planned out for two hundred years."

The parson when he read the story, knew that he had found a spiritual kinsman to the mother; for the mother, at seventy-five, is studying a new

language with a zest and eagerness that youth might envy. One day, when the parson and the mother were chumming it, and nibbling the bitter-sweet rind of some precious truth, whose kernel they could not reach, the mother said: "I have had a strange experience. I have not been able to sleep lately, and one night, as I lay there, wide awake, I thought I would try to see if I could say my prayers in Latin. I missed a word here and there, but found I could do it. Then I said them in French, and then in Spanish. It was just an experiment, and not at all a pious exercise. But, somehow, I got into the habit of doing it every night. Suddenly, it dawned on me that I had stumbled on a new truth. When I began my prayer in French, I found I was praying to the good God, and I realized that in my English prayer I had unconsciously been asking God to be good; and when I prayed in Latin, I found that there was a majesty in the face of the good God that I had missed seeing before; and when I prayed in Spanish, a subtle sense of a new value in the Father's love came to me. It was as if the spiritual inheritance of three great peoples had been added to the gift of what my own forefathers gave to me in their language." Then, for the first time, the parson realized the promise

## 66      **In the Service of the King**

hidden in the mission of the Church. Man cannot know God in His fulness till all the world knows Him. He had tried to know Matthew's Christ and Mark's Christ and Luke's Christ and John's Christ, but now he knew he would never know the Christ till he knew the world's Christ.

It was the mother who broke into a monologue of the parson's on Church unity, by saying: "Wait a moment, son. There is too much lost motion in that sort of talk for it to carry you to the end you seek. As long as you talk about the Church and the Churches, you beg the question; but the trouble lies deeper than mere words. It lies in the way you think about it. Suppose you substitute in your thought on this subject, Christ and the Cause, for the Church and the Churches. If you do, I believe the conclusion which you will reach will be an action, not an argument. As long as you confine yourself to talk, the case is a hopeless one; for every disputant speaks a different tongue and he convinces no one but himself. Action is the only universal language for it is a reality which needs no confusing symbol to interpret itself. Most of the arguments I ever heard were only elaborate excuses for not performing a very simple duty."

This talk with the mother sent the parson back

to his task with a new ideal. He has ever been chary of making rules for other people, but sometimes he made one for himself. The rule was hardly more than a programme of work to be done, but it has helped: "Study the big problems all the time, but never skip a small task, for one of those simple duties holds the key to the big problem."

One day he met the Baptist preacher on the street. They were good friends, for the parson had initiated him into the mystic Order of Fishermen, and steadied the boat while he struggled with his first big chub. It was the last of July, and the Baptist preacher was going away the next Monday for a month's holiday. The parson, with a little shaking of the knees, said: "I want you to do something for me on next Sunday. Tell your people for me that while you are away I should count it a privilege if they will let me minister to them should any sickness or sorrow come to them." The preacher was deeply moved, and said he would gladly deliver the parson's message. On Monday morning, the parson was sitting in his study, when one of the members of his church walked in. He plunged right into his story: "I've been expecting the coming of Judgment Day all this morning, and I came down for a moment's talk before it was announced. Have you heard

what happened at the Baptist church yesterday?" The parson replied that he had heard nothing, and his friend continued: "Well, the Baptist preacher delivered your message, and added: 'I gladly commit you, my people, to the pastoral care of my friend, the rector of St. Paul's Church.' If that isn't a preface to Judgment Day, it is a preface to something bigger still." The parson asked him what he would do if his next-door neighbour and friend were going away for a month and had stopped to say good-bye. Would he not say: "Tell the madam and the children if I can be of any service to them while you are away to call on me?" "Of course, I would," he replied. "Well, all that I did," said the parson, "was to raise the standard of Christian unity up to the level of the common courtesies of life." The friend went away, still insisting that some momentous event was about to shake the world. When, an hour later, the parson was crossing the street, he saw an old fellow rush toward him from the sidewalk. Not waiting to shake hands, he grabbed the parson in his arms, and hugged him. The man was an old huckster in the market, and there were tears in his eyes when he said: "We all love you for the message you sent us yesterday." The next Sunday the official board of the Baptist

church attended St. Paul's in a body, and on the Sunday after nearly half the congregation were Baptists. And some of them said that it was the first time they had ever been in an Episcopal church.

### III

Down on the James, where the parson used to spend his holidays as a boy, and where he first learned to know and love the glow and wonder of burning logs, there is a fire-log lore that never found its way into print. He who has sat in some spacious room, from whose walls be-ruffled gentlemen looked down, and watched in the twilight the big drift-log burning, has been to wonderland. There are greens and reds in the driftwood jets of flame that no artist ever put on canvas; and along the burning log, in glowing fresco, castles, and strange living things, bearing a likeness, now to man and now to beasts, show themselves. The castles loom, the weird faces grin and grimace for a moment, then crumble into ash; but even as you watch the crumbling desolation, unseen fingers build again the fleeting world of glory and of gloom.

The which is an allegory that will help explain, perhaps, the parson's liking for the company of the human drift that the winds of chance and the

floods of ill-fortune have flung at his feet. The tramp, the wanderer, the beggar, the derelicts, have ever appealed to him with growing power. Someone has said that kings are easy to paint, for they are taught to pose from babyhood; but the skulking figures that, with lowered head and slouching gait, come up the walkway as the twilight deepens, are quite a different task to limn. One of the parson's quests was to find his way into the heart of the derelict. His friends had laughed and called him "fool" when they knew that at his table and in his study, smoking the cigar of comradeship, had sat every type of failure that ever pointed a moral: impostors, ex-convicts, drunkards, thieves, victims of a drug, and the care-free adventurer, whose commissary equipment is a tomato can and a short-stem pipe. He has reduced his method of dealing with these to a well-ordered system. Start with the hypothesis—sometimes a difficult one—that every one of them is at bottom a human being like yourself. Give to the tramp brevet rank as a gentleman, so long as he is under your roof. Wait for the story till after he has left the dining-room. He can eat with his head down, but no man is going to smoke through a whole cigar without a puff or two toward the ceiling. A man is like a horse. If he is down,



you have got to get his head up before he can rise. Until he gets his head up, his struggles are futile. Once get the head up, you can stand aside, for, unless his back is broken, he will get to his feet alone.

Some of the most interesting men the parson ever knew have been derelicts. Stories of prison life, stories of folly and crime, pitiful tales of poverty and shame, the confession of the wild abandon of passion that sent the wanderer on his way with the mark of Cain on his brow, a grim humour that mocked at despair, and a strange philosophy that drew content out of wretchedness and rags—the parson has watched it all, as the fires of memory were kindled in the driftwood of the world. Half of it was lying, perhaps, but the material for the story had been gathered with bleeding hands in the waste places of the world. Sometimes he felt the story-teller was telling the tale of another's life, and not his own, but the parson never questioned the right of the despoiler to his borrowed robe of shame. He has seen hope show its radiant face just for a fleeting moment ere it crumbled into ash, and he has not despaired. If but the passing touch of kindness could stir the dead soul to even a fitful breath of aspiration, he knew that when once the living Christ, incar-

nate in the life of all who call Him Lord, shall walk the earth again, then will the Saviour's hope be fulfilled, His purpose come to wonderful fruition. It was his ministry to the driftwood of the world that suggested to the parson to study anew the mission of the King. To his glad amazement, when he read the words in Greek, he found that the King had said: "I am come to seek and to save that which has gone to smash."

One winter's evening the parson was sitting in his study. The lamps had been lit, and he was reading, when the bell rang. He opened the door, and saw standing there a well-dressed stranger, who asked if this was the rector, and gave his own name. The parson shook hands and said that he was glad to know him. The man replied: "You little know what I am, or you would not say that." "No matter what you are," answered the parson, "it will not prevent you from getting a welcome here. Come in." "Well, sir, I don't want to come in under false pretences. I am a thief," replied the stranger, still standing outside the door. "The welcome still holds good," answered the parson. "Come in!" The man began his story, but the parson stopped him. "Wait until after supper, when we can have the evening to ourselves." The parson then excused himself and

went to tell the wife there was a guest. "We have a thief downstairs who has consented to take tea with us," he told her. "All right," she answered, "I'll be down in a moment. I can stand for the thief, but I am glad it is no worse. You know you might have captured a murderer for a table companion."

After the stranger rallied from the dazed state into which he seemed to have fallen, he talked freely. He had been a student at the parson's old college, and knew many people who were friends of the parson and his wife. He had been a lawyer and an editor, and talked about his work and his life in a distant city. There was nothing during the meal to suggest that the stranger was not an honoured guest. When the parson and the stranger were back in the study, and the parson's long pipe was aglow, and the stranger had been persuaded to light a cigar, the story came.

It was the old, familiar story of drink. Months of hard work, then the mad craving for liquor, and the long debauch. The last one had lasted through weeks, till he reached a state of irresponsible madness. When his brain cleared, he found himself in a cell in a jail of a city several hundred miles from his home. He was told that he had forged a check, used the mails for fraudulent purposes, and

stolen and sold a bicycle. At the end of six months he had been set free on a technicality, but faced the probability of being arrested again, so had fled. Potentially, he was a fugitive from justice. "Have you no family?" asked the parson. "My mother is living," he answered; "but she did not write to me while I was in jail. I have no right to criticize her," he added, "for I have broken every promise I ever made to her, and when I was drinking, I have stolen the very ornaments in her parlour to pawn for drink. She believes I am a hopeless case, and I believe so too." "What are you going to do now?" the parson asked. "I do not know," he answered. "I am fleeing from the face of man. My only hope is to find some place where no one lives who ever saw me before. An old acquaintance, or one who was once my friend, is now my worst enemy. Without any warrant for so doing, I am asking you to give me money to make my flight possible."

The parson depleted his shallow exchequer, and handed him a \$5 note. "There is no string to this," he said; "you can do with it what you will. If you believe that your mother is right, and that your own opinion of yourself is right, then you will probably take it and get drunk. If you

do, I shall not blame you. But remember, I am a messenger of the Christ, and He bids me tell you that you are not a hopeless proposition, that the making of a man is still in you. It is on His Word, not on any judgment of my own, that I give you this money." They talked for a long time, and finally the man arose to say good-bye, as he was to take a night train. Up to this point, the parson had travelled over perfectly familiar ground; then, suddenly, he was ushered into a hidden chamber of the human heart. The thief held out his hand. "I thank you very much," he said, "for the money you have given me. I shall not try to thank you for the other gift." "What other gift?" asked the parson. "The gift of life," he answered, as his voice broke with sobs. "I have a large acquaintance in this and other States, but in all God's universe I know no man, except you, who would have asked me to-night to sit at the table with his wife. When I came here, I was outside the pale of humanity; I had ceased to be a man. When you made me your guest, you made me a human being again. There may be words that can express the feeling of an outcast from the race when he feels the glow of human fellowship again; but I don't know the words. Good-bye." He went out into the night, and

two days later the parson got a letter. It was very brief: "I had a hard fight when I got up-town. The money would have made it so easy to forget; but I won out, and I hope yet to be the man God meant me to be."

## THE CITY MINISTRY

### I

THE parson had entered on his thirteenth year in his town ministry, and had begun to have an institutional value in the community. The ministry is the symbol of service, but the content of the symbolism is a living thing; hence a parson becomes a community asset only after the testing years have made his life an open book. During the first years, he argues for the cause; when he is known and judged of men he becomes the argument, good or bad, for the cause. The parson has known men to refuse to go again to a church because, as they said: "I have hunted with that preacher, and he is at bottom thoroughly selfish. He cannot teach me anything." It was that sort of rough comment, heard around the camp-fire, that illumined for the parson the meaning of the King's words, "Ye are the light of the world." It was the parson, and not his sermon, that was the message to men. The realization of this truth

has made him utterly wretched, when at the end of day he looked back and found that some foolish vanity had marred his work, or some petty selfishness or shrinking cowardice had wrought an injury to the cause. It was a poor sermon and a weak argument that he had given to men that day. It was the feebleness of his week-day sermons, not of his Sunday utterances, that haunted him. The story of old Dr. Johnson and the beggar often came to his mind: "Who are you?" asked Dr. Sam of the beggar. "I am a poor old struggler," came the answer. "Would you mind shaking hands with me, madam?" said the doctor, lifting his hat. "That's just what I am, a poor old struggler." Like a flagellant of old, he was tempted to beat into his brain and heart the words he was forever saying to himself: "Be true to the King. At any cost be true."

One morning he looked up from his desk to see the Bishop and two strangers coming up the walkway. The Bishop was the spokesman: "We have come to tell you that the quiet days of your ministry are over. You have had years in which you found leisure to study and to dream dreams. These men have come to offer you a task too large for one man, but one man is all that can be spared for the work. Will you undertake the hard task?"



## 80      In the Service of the King

It was like a blow in the face; but there seemed no escape, and the parson answered: "I will undertake the work if, after a talk with the vestry, they will accept me as a leader."

The call to the large church had come, and it did not quicken a pulse beat. There was no sense of exhilaration, and the parson knew, as he looked upon the calm of his inner life, that the chastening vision of the King that had come to him as a young deacon had taught him thoroughly the utter unseemliness of vanity when his name was called out to go and find a way.

The parson met the vestry of the city church. He wonders, sometimes, if they did not have bad dreams that night, haunted by the thought that they had invoked catastrophe on their church by insisting that the parson should come to them. The parson returned to them their formal call, and told them that they were released from any obligation to him. He tried to make them understand that there was real danger of a sad misfit; that it was a dangerous experiment to transplant one whose life had been spent in quiet by-paths, into the hurry and strivings of the city; that he had neither temperament nor talent for the rôle of the dignified ecclesiastic; that he had got the habit of snapping conventions if they hampered

his freedom; that he had startled his town vestry by preaching repeatedly on the street corner from a wagon, and that if he came to them, it would be with the full and clear-cut purpose to carry what the Church stood for into every side-street and back-alley of the city, and that if they would not help him carry it there, he would not come.

Even when the parson was talking to the vestry he was conscious of a constitutional weakness that tempts him to meet every crisis of his life by making a speech. He has often felt that he belonged to another age, the age of the monologists—those sapient ones who wrote pamphlets when they could not get an audience; and when they met a lone traveller, held him with a glittering eye till the tale was told. Still, when one has grown accustomed to having old chums greet him, after long absence, with the invariable salutation, accompanied by a slap on the back, "Well, you old crank, how are you?" he is justified, perhaps, in the effort to make men know his standard before entering into a relationship as intimate and thorough-going as that of pastor and people. And this was the parson's creed of service, crude and imperfect it may be, but tested by sixteen years of striving within the narrow confines of his former ministry.

When the parson was settled in his new home, he found himself in a swirl of activities. He became at once the helpless victim of a conspiracy of kindness. First came the receptions and evenings out. He and his wife were expected once and sometimes twice a day to be the guests at some function. In the old familiar intercourse of his town ministry he had been accustomed to drop in to the evening meal, and put his own chair to the table; now he learned the new art of perpendicular eating. Strange food served in lettuce leaves was his daily diet; and in what looked to him like chicken salad he discovered malaga grapes and curious confections. He was forced to wear what he used to call "his other clothes" every day; and instead of sitting down to a square meal of talk, he had to partake of what he called "capsule conversation" (a handshake, a smile, and inanity and a bow). He began to feel as if the tissues of his brain were being picked to pieces. He was hopelessly unfitted for this kind of social manoeuvre and floundered helplessly.

Then came the invitations to deliver addresses. There is no use in recording the number, for it would not be believed. He addressed every organization known to our modern civilization, from the Bootblacks' Union to the Daughters of

Royalty. Well for him that his old student habits had taught him how to work. He unscrewed the bells of the telephone, locked himself in his study, and, with a sort of blow-pipe intensity, made preparation for these addresses. The fact that he strove by exacting study to give direction and substance to these addresses, was recognized as a tribute to the generous courtesy of those who had asked his counsel, and they repaid his efforts with a meed of praise wholly out of proportion to their worth. He began to feel the thrill of that subtle intoxicant, the untempered word of a crowd's flattery. The parson realized that he was entering upon a phase of life new to him. Whether he liked it or not, he now had to deal with crowds. The one demand upon him was that he should please. At first, it seemed to him a meaningless waste of time. He was not a candidate for public applause, and the brief experience of those first months taught him that here was a real danger of mental and moral deterioration. Yet, if he meant to be God's minister to that community, it would not be a negligible asset to knit to himself by a bond of common interest the various groups of men and women in the city. Having decided that it was worth while, he tried to form his code of action. He would

## 84      **In the Service of the King**

learn to take the labour incident to this sort of work as a recreation, not as a burden. He must be sane, and study to win, not betray, the intelligence of his audience. He must bear in mind that he who tries to win the favour of the crowd will soon be tempted to pawn his honour in order to save his winnings. He must remember that reputation lives in the crowd, and to live up to his reputation meant only to follow the crowd. If he hoped to lead, he must live beyond man's estimate of him; and so he made a motto for himself, a motto which he tried to translate into Latin, but failed: "Keep yourself in the running, always a lap ahead of your reputation."

After the parson ceased to be a novelty and something like a normal existence became possible, he tried to follow the advice of those who told him that an ordered mode of life would increase his efficiency. He must have office hours, and do his pastoral work systematically. Each day was to see a carefully prepared programme, and the earned hours of rest could be set aside. After a brief trial of the system he discarded it absolutely and forever. How was he to have an ordered life when the sick and the sorrowing and the needy were everywhere? How was he to follow a programme when the coveted opportunity of

intimate converse offered itself in some office or sick-room at the hour when the fixed order of his life demanded that he be waiting for the possible caller at his home? Pain and poverty and shame knew no schedule of hours, and these called to him with urgent voice. How was he to think of hours of leisure when a congregation of men and women listened with eager intelligence and hungered to be taught? How could he rest when every day some new task beckoned him to the doing of it?

The problem of poverty had hardly come into his life before, and now when he touched it in the city, he almost felt as if the Church were a failure. The physical needs of the destitute were being met by the agencies of organized charity; but the poor themselves were unshepherded. He suddenly realized that the question, "Why do not the poor go to church?" was a foolish question. The only question with which he must concern himself was, "Why does not the Church go to the poor?" Again he found himself confronted with the fact that the Church was too busy trying to save itself. The church of which he found himself the rector was making, through the beautiful service of a band of Christian women, some effort to touch the lives of the needy ones; but even those who gathered in the parish house seemed to

feel that they were coming to man's church, and not the Father's house. Little by little the truth came home to him that the tabernacle of the church, like the tabernacle of her Lord, must be flesh, and not stone or brick. The church was suffering from house-mould. Christianity needed sunshine and exercise. Sometimes as he pondered over the problem he was tempted to pray for a houseless church, with the apostolic substituted for the Sarum usage; with only the outdoor ritual of visits to the fatherless and widows, and the worship of a stainless life as witness of loyalty to a living Lord.

The sacramental teaching of the Church had never quite obscured for him the classic meaning of sacrament as the soldier's oath of allegiance, and he longed to keep and help his fellows keep that oath. Whatever he may have failed in, he has at least brought it to pass that every destitute man or woman who comes seeking help from the organized charity of the city is within a few hours brought into touch with that Christian organization with which the needy one has ever had a real or nominal or inherited connection; and he looks to the day when there shall be no unshepherded poor within the city.

In his new work, as in his town ministry, he found the derelict was his teacher. One morning

before the family had come downstairs, he answered the door-bell, and saw an old woman standing there. He knew something of her history. She was the widow of a painter and was dependent now on charity. It was not her first visit, but her request that morning was new. "I come to ask you to give me something good to eat. I have meal and meat, but when I looked at them this morning I loathed that sort of food and could not swallow it." The parson insisted that she should come into his study and talk it over. While they talked, he heard the servant moving about in the dining-room, and saw that breakfast had been brought in. He asked the old beggar to come in to breakfast, and assured her that his wife would give her a glad welcome. The parson will never forget the look upon the aged face. Tears were in her eyes, and for a while the words would not come. At last she whispered in a choked voice. "Oh, no, sir; I could never do that, never, never!" No persuasion of the parson could make her see that it was a reasonable proposition. The whole thing seemed to her incongruous and out of the question. The parson gave her some food, and an order for a few dainties, and she left.

After breakfast, the parson sat down to write his sermon; but the face of the old beggar woman



## 88      In the Service of the King

kept getting between him and the page. "What had been the manner of his life that the wife of the painter should think it utterly incongruous that she should sit down at the table of the servant of the Carpenter?" This was the question he asked himself. He knew now that he had made a grievous mistake somewhere, and he took up the story of the Master's life to find out where he had failed. He found therein the Master's words, "Give, and men shall give unto you." And then he read that other promise, "When thou makest a feast, ask the poor," and thou shalt be blest of God. He knew the satisfaction of the fulfilment of the first promise. Men had given, pressed down and running over, the measure of their appreciation; but had he ever been even a candidate for God's blessing? This is the law of life: "Give, and man shall bless you; share, and God shall bless you." He saw the light; but it revealed to him only his fetters. No matter how he strove, the barrier between the poor and himself remained. The habit of the life called Christian had been accepted as the law of Christian living, and no declaration of the gospel of sharing would ever be intelligible to the unshepherded ones till the habit of social exclusiveness be branded as un-Christian by those who had willingly laid it aside.

## II

The parson belongs to a club which has for its qualifications the sole requisite that, as Henry Grady says, every man carries his sovereignty under his hat. It would be hard to find a gathering of people who are more certain of their grasp of universal truth, or more ready to lay a lance in rest against any opposing system. Preachers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, socialists, professors, captains of industry, and editors, are among them. When the paper is read and the discussion opened, only he who is prepared for a swash-buckler fête dares show his head. For many years the parson has argued it out with the masters of the world. He has been worsted a thousand times, but he has learned a little of the art. He is always a parson, and fights for his cause. He has learned not to be frightened by great names. He knows that St. Augustine is the spiritual ancestor of Jesuit, Presbyterian, Baptist, and High Churchman; that Calvin's logical system runs so smoothly that its great *non-sequitur* is difficult to detect,

## 90      **In the Service of the King**

because its premises are both true, though unrelated; that the man who finds it easy to prove everything really believes very little; that the man with the complete system is as dangerous a guide as the special pleader; that if you search long enough you can find a proof-text for any political heresy in the writings of the versatile Thomas Jefferson, just as every controversialist in theology gets his sharpest weapon from that most quotable of all sceptics, St. Augustine.

The most interesting disputant he knows is the omniscient, militant, German trained Ph.D., armed with a heresy that bears the date of his university degree. His train of thought is usually propelled by a sort of negative electricity, which will drive the wheels only backward. From intimate contact with them the parson has found out that "agnostic" is an objective and not subjective term. It means that the owner of the title believes that nobody else knows anything. Nothing gives him higher joy than to lay violent hands upon some aged truth clothed in the garment of ancient speech, and tear to pieces the outer garb of words, and drive into the limbo of lost ideals the aged ruler of the centuries. His quest is to find a myth, which is to him the one creative force in the sphere of mind. Truth is the barren offspring of time,

myth the one goddess of the dawn. He is the vicergerent of a mysterious power, which he calls science, the Lord of the material universe. His Ph.D. confers upon him a grace of orders. He speaks with a note of infallibility in a voice strangely like that of the mediæval Church. The vicergerent of a material universe, he claims lordship over all things spiritual. His concept of law in the sphere spiritual is modelled after the Russian code, which defines what a man can do by the gracious favour of the Czar; and all things not granted explicitly are thereby forbidden. His logic is perfect:

"If a man who turnips cries,  
Cries not when his father dies,  
It is proof that he had rather  
Have a turnip than his father."

His attitude toward theology is marked by a touch of pity. His voice is lowered when he explains that the seeming halo round its hoary head is but the phosphorescence of decay. He passes from the four walls of his laboratory, where the chastened elements do his bidding, out into the infinite of spirit, and does not doff his crown. He has proved that life exists only within certain degrees of heat; therefore, the nearest approach

to the concept of a Lord of life is heat. He has with his own eyes seen the frog that had no father, therefore a man need not lift his eyes from earth in order to seek the source of being. He has found a law in the jungle that the two forces that rule there are cunning and strength; therefore, morality is only a convention, and sacrifice a meaningless maiming of the life.

He knows to a nicety the source of the atavistic terror in the ululations of the wolf, but the crooning of the mother to her babe brings no message to his mind. Behind the modesty of his humble title, agnostic, is the mental arrogance of papacy. Affirming that God cannot be known, he is forever proclaiming what God is not, with the intimate knowledge of close acquaintance. The constant student of phenomena, he denies the validity of those spiritual forces which make life among men a possibility to him. Unconsciously he is repeating the ancient folly of the Church in trying to solve the equation of life with only two factors. For centuries the Church posited God and a man, and the problem of life was insoluble, for it left out mankind or the world. The agnostic posits man and the world, and leaves out God, and finds the equation a surd, as meaningless as the square root of a minus quantity.

The club is a valuable incident in the parson's routine existence. He knows that no argument of his under such conditions can carry conviction; but 'tis a good school of fence, and he understands history a little better now that he has watched the ancient errors of the Church being repeated in the name of science. He understands a little better than he did that for man truth is not a proposition but a life. He has learned to accept God's naming of life's Trinity, "Thou and God and thy neighbour."

Of course the parson has met the other type, the honest, reverent seeker for the keys to the locked chambers of nature, the man who in humble loyalty to his chosen work struggles ever to keep his mind sensitive to the approach of light; who, moving in a world of material things, seeks to know only facts; to whom science is a just and gracious sovereign, claiming the fealty of his intellect; the man who gazes out into the infinite of spirit, and frankly says: "This is to me the great unknown. The training of the laboratory, with its test-tubes and its microscope, has not fitted me to judge of that which cannot be confined and is intangible and imponderable. When you talk to me of spiritual data, I tell you frankly that the sensitized tissues of my brain have been trained

to respond only to the call of the senses. I, because my life has been spent in the service of man, the child of earth, cannot grasp the meaning of the talk of man, the child of God. Sequence I see and law, but the law is but the nature of the thing I see. Whence came this law I do not know. I am like the men who travelled with the Christians' saint toward Damascus, the light I see, but the voice I cannot hear." For such men the parson has an honest admiration. Their courage quickens his pulse-beat. Their loyalty gives his own allegiance new forms of expression. Their reverence for the tested law has taught him that reverence is not a thing of bowed head and bended knee, but the necessary expression of a loyal mind in the presence of truth. Their humility has chastened his own vanity, and their devotion typified his own desire.

One day the rector of another church in the city asked the parson to consider with him the advisability of planting a new congregation in the suburbs. To this rector such a movement would mean the maiming of his own church, for every member was apparently needed to do the work of the body, and a withdrawal meant in every case an amputation; but the rector in this, as in every test in which the parson saw him tried, put his

own interest at a negligible quantity and planned for the Cause alone. With the inspiration of such an example the parson sat down to study the question. To the other church it would mean the loss of a few much-needed men and women, but to the church under the care of the parson it would mean the loss of a large group who represented the present strength and future growth of the congregation, those just entering upon the maturity of life with their young children, born to the sweet proprietorship of beautiful homes.

But to the parson's mind a new church was needed, and the field ought to be occupied. It was, however, a new experiment, where instinct rather than knowledge was his guide. The church people were summoned to a conference, and to this conference many others who lived in that section of the town came. The parson and the rector of the other church urged their people to break the bonds that bound them to their old congregational life, and to enter upon a new life of their own. If the parson had any misgivings as to the wisdom of their action, those doubts were dispelled by the whispered comments of the visitors present. They said with a note of sadness, in which there was mingled, however, a note of exhilaration: "We never realized what a church meant before. To



## 96      **In the Service of the King**

see two ministers driving from the fold some of the choicest of their flock, and telling them it is their duty to depart, is a sight so strange that we never thought it among the possibilities of life. We have been taught to struggle for the upbuilding of our congregation. If there is a church which can see beyond its own congregational life, we want to know it better than we do."

The sequel of this incident (and the parson is persuaded that such an event ought to be an incident in the life of every church) was striking proof of its wisdom. A new church sprang into being, to whose open doors people are drawn who never knew the Church and her ways. The church of the rector who began the work has rallied from its loss and entered upon larger activities, with a higher vision of service and joy in the discovery of unappreciated powers within itself. For some months within the mother church, the story of the exodus of her young life was told anew at every service; but a new life began to show itself in every branch of congregational activity. Within the year the vacant places were filled, and lives in which undiscovered or unappropriated powers of service had lain unutilized were sending energy into the church whose need of them had just been realized. The parson is persuaded that the child-

less church is as tragic in the pathos of its finality as is the childless home of man.

As the parson sat for three weeks in Synod Hall, and followed with increasing interest the life of the Church struggling for expression, he realized as never before the splendid vitality of the Church he loved. He had dreaded the test, for the great metropolis was to him the symbol of material power. The very bigness of the buildings was evidence of man's daring and man's strength. The rush and rumble of the city were to his provincial ear like the noises of nature in convulsion. The teeming multitudes of the streets seemed to mock the efforts he was making to bring to a knowledge of the King the little city in which he lived. The problems of poverty and sin were multiplied a thousand-fold, and God, who seemed so near to him as he ministered to his own little flock, seemed infinitely distant there in the great city. It was hard to retain the sense of spiritual values, when on every side the struggle for material things absorbed the life of men. The Christianity he knew had come to him in the symbolism of the home, and he found it difficult to associate the ideal of home with the crowded dwellings of the poor or the artificial housing systems of the well-to-do. To his experience, the life of a com-

## 98      **In the Service of the King**

munity had been in the home, but here man's life seemed to be in the streets. The cynic's definition of man as the trading animal came to his mind, and he realized that until man recognizes that commerce is God's, he cannot be saved. He looked at his fellows in the hall, and wondered if the shadow of the big buildings had fallen on them too.

As the days passed the parson's fear subsided, for the New York Convention was the triumphant assertion of the transcendent worth of spiritual things. He had been reared among a people to whom loyalty is the first of virtues, and the fierce loyalty of those who stood to guard the heritage of the Church filled him with admiration. What that heritage was, became more and more a confused conception to him as the strife of words went on. Both sides were in deadly earnest, and brother fought against brother. Each claimed to be the loyal son and each demanded the right to be sole guardian of the life and honour of the Church. The very intensity of every man's purpose gave a reality to the struggle. None could question the candour and the courage of those who flung their claims to heirship into the face of a hostile majority, a majority that shrank to a timid minority at the first taunt of disloyalty.

One fact stood out, and that was, that every type of temperament was represented there. The Church was clearly a family, and not a cult; for a cult is a temperamental group, and a family, the unity amid variety.

As day after day the struggle went on, the parson began to dread a victory for either side. He was as much a partisan as any; but he asked himself whether there was in him the spiritual capacity either to use wisely the fruits of victory, or to serve with fidelity under the rule of a system hostile to the habit of his mind and life. It was then that he first put to himself the question, "What is the meaning of the struggle? What are we striving to do?" The answer to this question came with startling clearness: "For three weeks the chosen representatives of the Church have fought with the fierceness of strugglers in the arena in order to save the Church." The answer frightened him, for it was the same that had come when he sought the reason for the Church's failure to bring sweetness and light into the scattered homes of his first field of labour in the country. It was the same answer that had explained to him why Christianity wasted its strength in the petty strivings of village jealousy. It was the same answer that he had found written large on every

rival meeting-place of Christians in the town. It was the same answer that had explained to him the presence of the multitude of unshepherded ones in the city.

The Church was seeking to save itself. As the parson pondered the words there in Synod Hall the long-delayed vision came to him. He leaped to his feet to speak; but well, perhaps, for the cause, he was denied recognition. God will one day vouchsafe to a larger soul, with hands more fit to bear it, His message to His Church. "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." That is the King's message to His Church as it is to every soldier in the line. The Church does not exist in order to save itself. Its one mission is to carry out the King's will. The Church exists to save the world. The Church is His Body, and that Body must be broken, offered with the gladness of willing sacrifice in order that men may live. Its seamless robe must be stripped from it, and its vesture parted. Its splendid history must be made a common heritage. Its compact organization must be dissolved, so that in open formation there may be place for every soldier to find a way up the steep ascent. Its unity, transcending any bond of local or inherited tradition, must be grounded in loyalty to Christ alone, and the Church

must fling itself without reserve against the forces of evil, unheeding what its fate may be. This is the Church's destiny. Better that the Church should lose its life fighting for the Christ in regions a thousand miles beyond where Ingle died in far-off China, and find it amongst the redeemed millions of the East, glorified by sacrifice and transformed by experience, than to waste its strength in struggles at home in the futile effort to save itself. God's purpose is larger than the Episcopal Church, though it may be granted to that Church to make that purpose clear to the world.

### III

Somebody has said that a Russian consists of three parts: body, soul, and passport. Be this as it may, it is certain that every Virginian consists of man, and gun, and a faithful negro friend to whom, in spite of all fourteen amendments to the Constitution, his white friend is still lord and master. The parson's third part was named Bill, and like Gunga Din, he was white, clear white inside. The parson was not the best shot in the world, but Bill never lost heart. When the bag was empty at sunset he would still insist: "You're sure goin' to git somethin' on the way home." As a final proof of his belief that something would show up, he would say: "Cap'n (for some occult reason he always called the parson "Captain"), I'll promise to eat anythin' you kill 'ceptin' a snake." One afternoon, when Bill had paddled many miles and not a single mallard had been seen, he prodded the parson's waning hope with the usual promise. Just then, the parson caught sight of a big barn owl, perched on the dead limb

of a tall pine. He fired, and the bird fell. "There is your supper, Bill," he said, "I hold you to your promise." Bill looked at the big owl dubiously. "I ain't never heard of anybody eatin' an owl, but if it can be done, I'se gwine to do it." Next day the parson met Bill, and inquired if he had kept his promise. "I honest tried to, Cap'n. I sot down to pick dat owl, and worked on 'im for an hour. I was knee-deep in feathers when I got through, but I ain't never found no owl. He warn't thar. Them feathers growed right out of de bones. No, sir, I swar it, the owl hisself warn't thar." Bill has gone to the happy hunting-grounds, but when at night the wind howls and the cold creeps under the blankets, the parson knows, even in his sleep, that the ducks are coming to their refuge in the marshes, and like a nodding hound he too hunts in his dreams, and Bill is with him again.

The parson has always been a collector. He has gathered arrowheads, birds' eggs, stamps, counting-out-rhymes, and picked up Minie balls from an old battle-field; but Bill's story of his attempt to eat the owl gave him a new idea. For many years now he has been a collector of owls. Owl is the genus, and the species are many. He has collected owl books, owl sermons, and has a



long list of people who, in spite of the fact that they vote or want to vote, are really only owls. He has what he believes to be some almost perfect specimens. He has picked till the room itself seemed full of feathers, but "the owl hisself warn't thar." And this is the test of a perfectly developed owl. The owl is a natural ponderer. He shuts his eyes to facts and then begins to ponder the riddle of the universe. The parson has one specimen which he keeps apart from the rest. There was no dearth of feathers; the picking took many hours, and was renewed from day to day; but in the end, the owl "was thar." And by the same token, he was not an owl at all. The parson was looking out of his study window, and saw him coming,—tall, gaunt, walking with shoulders bent and head thrust forward, looking with intense vision, as if he expected something suddenly to materialize in the open spaces. He was plainly the problem man. Even as he came up the walkway, the parson could see his hands working nervously. Sometimes for a second the long fingers rested tip to tip, and then they would interlace and he would twist them as if tying a knot. The parson understood it all afterwards. The man was a master mechanic and an inventor, and all his life his hands had interpreted his thoughts.

As soon as he began to talk the fingers were busy; they were never still. But it was his face that told the story. It was the face of one who lived indoors, bleached like a prisoner's, and seamed with deep lines, with one furrow like a gash between the bushy brows. The deep-set, grey eyes kindled to intensity as he talked. His great beard had once been red, but was flecked now with grey. It was the finely-textured beard that had never known the touch of razor, and the grey mingled with the red looked like ashes on a burning log. As he stood there at the study door, trying to explain the meaning of his visit, the parson, who had kept a book of people for twenty years, knew that he had found a new type. "I have come," he said, "on a strange mission. I am looking for words. I have been to the libraries and searched their shelves in vain. At last they sent me here to you. I want to make myself understood, and they told me you were a teacher of men. I do not come looking for ideas. I have my message; but the men to whom I give it do not understand. I want words, simple words, strong words, words that carry and stick in men's brains, words they will not forget. Is there no book where I can find such words?" The parson made the old man sit down, and then he lit his long-stemmed council

pipe before he made reply. The parson's pipe has long served a double purpose. Smoking is the most conciliatory of all the serious occupations of man, and the lighted pipe tempers the dogmatic air that is the bane and blight of all counsellors. The pipe transforms the functionary into a friend, and creates that level of intimacy along which confidence travels with never a jolt. The pipe brings calm, and under its spell the taut muscles of the over-wrought are relaxed. The pipe frees the poor slave of time from his serfdom to the clock, for life's span becomes a matter of unmeasured pipe-lengths. The clock may nick its notches in the passing hour, but to him who watches the circling smoke ascend, time has ceased to be attended by the noisy huzzy whose one aim is to hurry. The old man's fingers, which had been moving like shuttles while he stood, were resting now on their tips as he watched the parson light the council fire. When the pipe began to draw, and smoke-rings hovered in the air, the old man's fingers began once more their restless tattoo. He was growing impatient. "The book," he said. "Surely there must be such a book." "There is such a book," replied the parson, "and you have passed it by a thousand times. It is called *Mother Goose*." The old man rose from his chair, and

glared at the parson in sudden anger. "You are mocking me. I came to you for help, and you are trying to show me up as a fool." The parson waved the old man back to his seat, and said: "Listen. I am going to repeat some of the words of the book:

'Simple Simon met a pieman going to the fair,  
Said Simple Simon to the pieman, "Let me taste  
your ware."  
Said the pieman to Simple Simon, "Show me first  
your penny,"  
Said Simple Simon to the pieman, "Indeed I have  
not any."'

I have repeated four lines,—every word in them is a part of the vocabulary of every man you know. They stick in the brain like cockle burrs in a cow's tail. Not only the words stick, but the story they tell sticks. You see it all: the simpleton, the pieman, the pies, even the empty pocket, and you will never see another pieman or an idiot boy that the story will not come back to you. For you, that pieman will never die, and every fool's name is Simon.

"The story of the man in the moon, who burned his mouth upon some cold pease porridge, will give your hearers more knowledge of the physical conditions in the moon than a two-hours lecture

## 108      In the Service of the King

on astronomy. You know it is so cold up there that if the old gentleman whose fat face we see in the moon, should attempt to eat what you left of yesterday's apple-dumplings, it would be so much hotter than what his regular fare is that the first spoonful would make him howl with pain. What you have got to learn is that words are only labels, and a man's vocabulary is the list of names on his stock of experience. You might as well give him a lot of empty boxes or bottles, as to talk to him in words whose meaning he does not know. Don't dress the shepherd boy in the warrior king's armour. Give him a sling-shot, and help him find the smooth, round stone."

For several pipe-lengths the old man and the parson talked of words; and when he left he asked if he might come again. He came often after that, and their talk ate the heart out of many a productive morning. The old man was morbidly candid. "Remember," he said, "I come by your invitation, and I have no claim upon your time. I am not a Christian. I believe in psychology, but I have no theology. This is the only Creator I know," and he touched his brow, and the pliant fingers began their weaving of invisible things. "All right," said the parson, "we will talk with that understanding. I have a theology, and claim

kinship to a Maker of my mind. You refuse to posit God. Pour in the grist, and we will begin to grind." Again and again as they talked the parson would say: "Back to your side of the line. You've gotten on God's side." And the old man would struggle to restate his answer to the riddle and to make man the measure of all things.

The old man was a reformer. He was in search of a method or means by which to re-make the world of men. The parson has known many reformers, but never one to whom his purpose was dearer. "I am an old man," he said, "and I must hurry. If I cannot find the way I must invent one. Man has solved the other problems, he can solve this one. The answer is not physical force, for it must act on mind. If I can only find the law, and fix it in a phrase so that it can drive the mind of men. That is the reason I must leave out the God of whom you talk. There must be no unknown quantities in the answer to the world's need. I have read books till I am almost blind, but they do not help." "What sort of books?" asked the parson. "Books on wages," he answered, "books on labour and capital, books on government. I have found books which helped me to see more clearly what I already knew, but no books which

helped me to make the other man see—the man who does the wrong.”

“I, too, have read these books,” said the parson, “and even when they satisfy my intelligence I feel their schemes are futile; for they deal with men as things, not persons. The equilibrium they establish is hopelessly unstable; for it holds only as long as men are full-fed. They make hunger and cold the worst of human ills. They make the strong share with the weak under threat of the law’s coercion, forgetting that law is only the weapon of the strong. They leave the world an armed camp still. The only laws that interest me deeply are interpretative, not coercive. I am more concerned with motives than with measures. The law of the pack can never be the code of man. It will take man at his highest efficiency to establish a social equilibrium; and man reaches that efficiency only in the service of a cause for which he will gladly sacrifice himself. What you have to prove is the worth of humanity, not the rights of man. Men argue and contend about rights; but they surrender in the presence of a worth they cannot deny. To my mind, the whole problem is to establish a ground for the assumption of human brotherhood. If every man is an individual creator, and there is none higher, then the prob-

lem is insoluble; and had the world never heard of God it would have to postulate Him in order to begin the solution of the problem."

Such was ever the manner of their talk: each flying his kite in the storm, with the key to the strong box of his inmost thought tied to it, hoping that some lightning flash from out the unknown might seal the confirmation of his guess.

One afternoon a brother parson and teacher of philosophy in a college was in the study when the old man came. The professor rose to leave, but the parson whispered: "Wait, you will never see another like him." The old man never got very far away from his favourite theme, and he soon had the universe by the ears, shaking it, and demanding an answer to his questioning. He hurled queries at the professor which could be answered only by a treatise. Finally, he said: "You men who believe in God, sometimes, I almost feel you are on the right track. Though if you are, you make small use of your power. Why don't you change the world? I know little of your belief. My father had argued God out of the universe before I was born, and there never was a God in my home, even as a child. But there is something in man, I know not whether it be his strength or his weakness, which tempts him to



make a god for himself. May I tell you a story of a man whom I know well?" Then he told this tale. Never once did he forget and speak as if the story were a chapter from his own life; but more than once he rose and pointed his long finger to a corner of the room as if the thing of which he talked were close at hand. His voice quivered with the tense passion of his emotion, and his hand shook as if a present horror held him gripped.

"There was a man who once lived in this town, a man of the people. All his long life he had toiled with his hands. He was a mechanic. He knew the sufferings, the needs, the shame, the injustices borne by his fellow-toilers. He had known days of plenty, when for a time he was tempted to forget the things that he had seen. He had known days of scarceness, when day by day he bartered all the comforts of his home for bread, until at last he, with his wife and child, had watched the very beds on which they had slept, still warm with the heat of their own bodies, carried off to pay debts; and he and they stood empty-handed in the empty house, helpless as a babe in the desert, forgotten by a moving caravan. But even then his was a more favoured lot than that of many of his fellows, for he was a master-workman, and among the first to be called when the strong ones flung to

the starving multitude the blessed or cursed privilege of toiling like slaves to keep the reservoir of wealth filled to the brim. All through the years of toil a passion like a blight was on the man, ever to find a better way of doing his task. Now it was a better drill, now a new device to make the friction less. Again and again he saw the result of many a night of toil swept like all the rest into the stream that emptied into that huge reservoir from which he could not drink. He listened to the murmurs of the other workmen, joined their clubs, and heard wild talk of torch and bomb, and knew he could never follow such madmen. He longed for order, not for chaos, in the world. There must be some way to stay the waste and to lessen the friction of the world. The problem was a mechanical one, and he set himself the task to solve it. He studied the conditions of his fellow-workmen; he read and thought until the hinges of his brain were hot. He tried to teach the men about him to value and to demand the decencies of life in home and shop. He must clean the machine before he began to experiment with it. The men he strove to help called him a faddist and a fool. He sought the employers and demanded that they give the men these things. The employers asked if the men had sent him, and

if they wanted what he asked; and he was forced to answer 'No.' They too thought him a foolish dreamer and sent him away ashamed. He did not despair, but still wrestled with the scheme of things, ever seeking the better way. He gave himself no rest. Body and brain alike he drove with rein and lash, till one day his body failed him and for weeks he could not work. For the first time he knew despair. The struggle seemed utterly vain. There was no better way. Might was the only right, and the weak were made to be preyed upon. There was no meaning or purpose in the world. He laughed aloud when he thought of the poor fools who had made themselves a god. His own life had been a stupendous folly from the first. He no longer thought of the world of men. His world was peopled by only two other than himself—his wife and child—and he found himself snarling at them if they crossed for a moment his selfish will. It was time to end the farce. He would die. When he had formed this decision a sudden calm came to him. He planned the end and took a joy in arranging every detail. He found a thick grove standing in an open meadow, and chose within it the very spot where he would die. He went to the druggist and bought a drug he knew would kill. He had often bought chemi-

cals from the man, and they gave him what he wanted without question. As he walked for the last time through the crowded streets, he experienced a strange exultation. He could feel the weight of the bottle in his coat, and again and again he touched it to get the thrill it sent through his whole body. It was the key to freedom that he held. As he left the outskirts of the town and entered the open field, he smiled at his own eagerness, and said aloud: 'My youth has come back to me. I am a boy again.' But even as he spoke he found himself stopped as by an unseen hand. Between him and the grove there lay the bare carcass of a horse. The birds had had their feast, and now only a lone dog, almost as gaunt as the dead thing whose bones it gnawed, was there. The joy died in his heart. So this was death, the prize he sought! The sight, loathsome as it was, did not make him afraid. He was but more eager to get rid of life whose way led only to the carcass and the dog. He tried to turn his eyes away, but could not. Just then, the dog lifted its head and saw him. It dropped a bone and came fawning at the man's feet, bringing with it the stench of carrion. The man kicked the foul thing from him and hurried on; but the dog followed at his heels. He found a stone and threw it, but even as he

turned to go on the dog came towards him. Then the man saw a stick and picked it up, keeping it close to him till the fawning hound crept near, then he struck it with all his might, and the dog, yelping with pain, fled from him for a little space; then, whimpering still, crept cringing back. Still holding the stick, the man hurried on, not looking back till he reached the edge of the wood; then, when he looked, the dog was still there. He threw the stick at it and cursed it, but the dog would not leave. When the man's rage had spent itself, he stood there gazing at the dog, and tried to calm his throbbing brain that he might think. He had pictured the scene so often to himself. He would lie down and put the blessed fluid to his lips, then sleep would come to him. He would sink with a soft surrender into nothingness, would cease to be. In a day or two at most, some passerby would find him sleeping there, and take what had been a man home to his wife and child. The wife would touch his brow and say: "The poor old struggler deserves his rest"; and his son would say: "He was so tired with it all. It is well." But now he pictured another scene. The presence of the carrion birds would make men stop to look, and they would find the mangled body, torn by the teeth of a starving dog. They would take

the horrid mass and lay it at the door of his home, and the sight of it would make his wife a maniac and drive his son to drink or madness. He could not do as he had willed. Death was denied him. Through all the planning of his deed there had come to him no thought of God; but now he asked himself what it was that stayed his hand? A dog? He called the dog to him, and looked into its eyes and talked to it: 'Can it be that the God I have denied and mocked at all my life is here, speaking to me through you? Can it be that the God whom men call Infinite has wrapped Himself within the body of a hound, to tell me that the life He gave is not mine to fling away? Chance, or God, or some unknown directing will, thou art greater than I, and to thee I surrender. Oh! possible God within this dog, to Thee I bow my head.'

"It may have been a passing madness, but the man felt conquered by the Presence that would not leave him. He flung the poison from him, and retraced his steps. The dog followed him to where the meadow met the town, and then left him. When the man reached home, the wife and son were waiting at the gate, and for the first time in many weeks he kissed them both."

**118     In the Service of the King**

When the old man ceased, there was silence for a little while; then he arose, saying: "I am afraid that I have tired you with all my talk. Good-bye."

## FIRESIDE TALK

### I

No recorded memory of the way could fail to make glad mention of the power that for nearly twenty years has made the hard task easy. God gave to him a home, and wise and blessed womanhood to make beautiful and sweet its rich possession. The kindly critic who has tried in vain, alas, to check the parson's apostolic failing of long preaching by asking him, "Why did you preach two sermons this morning? Would not one have sufficed?" who has whispered, "Tu quoque," when the parson's own weakness or self-indulgence has been the theme of his warning to his people; whose gracious hospitality has brought to many a lonely heart the sense of home, whose transforming touch made the house beautiful, even in those first meagre days, till one who knew said to her, "Yours is the most graceful poverty I ever saw"; whose insight read the meaning and found the answer to many a problem, in which the blunter



senses of the parson blindly groped; whose courage has so often changed the hopeless quest to one of glad adventure; whose road song has made the mile-posts seem never very far apart, even to tired feet; who has somewhat of the Master's power, that wondrous gift of His to the chosen few, the power that wins the love of little children, and makes the beggar long to touch the garment with clinging, helpless hand of trust; who keeps the bitter balm of pain hid like miser's gold, but shares the laughter with a lavish hand; who wears amid the mass of dark hair the broad band of grey that came in a single day, when the repeated wrench of human loss failed to bring from the set lips a single plaint, and God's finger touched her brow and left Its print upon her head; who moves among her children, to them the first and best of earth; who has reared two young idolaters, for Mother is the religion of her boys, and until the King vouchsafes to them the larger vision of Himself, the parson is glad to have it so; whose nature is as rich in surprises as when the parson used to thumb the rhyming dictionary as a boy in order to tell her how many ways he loved her.

## II

There is an Idyl of the King no poet yet has sung. The story is the call of God to youth. Amid his books the boy hears whisper, clear to the inner sense, as sound of bell to outer ear when the wind sleeps. To him who hears within his soul the still, small voice, saying, "Come to me," there is no need to ask, "Who speaks?" If one born inland were carried in his sleep to where the mighty ocean laps the shore, and, wakened suddenly, should hear the murmur of the waves, he would not have to wait for dawn to know the sea is there. No man has ever yet kept tally of his pulses' beat when, suddenly aroused, he stood where mortal sense ends, flush with the infinite. No man has told his vision of the King of kings; for words are symbols of familiar things, and He who lays the consecrating hand upon the head of youth, is to the senses veiled. This is perhaps the one great, wondrous hour of a disciple's life—the call to service, the vision of the King, the utter helplessness that clings to the might of Him who is so

near, the knightly sense of honour undeserved. There is no mortal witness to this dedication of a life untried, undisciplined, and uninformed. To the knightly soul there is no thought of self, only the deep desire to fight under the banner of the King. He enters the new life, eager for the struggle. At the very threshold stands the tempter, so little like a form of evil that the young soldier never harbours for a moment a thought of danger. The voice is sweet and gentle as the Mother's own. The life of the one who speaks is but the gracious sequence of gentle thoughts and kindly deeds. She loves the Cause for which the young knight would fight. She loves him for his devotion to the Cause. It is the hand of misguided love that turns the young soldier from the way that leads to the shining table-land, where dwells the goodly company of those who have seen His face. The cup she gives to him is mixed with death; for she tells him to look within himself and see the splendid sacrifice he has made in giving his life to the King. He who listens to such talk will not go far. When soldiers see their captain lead his horse to drink before the charge is sounded, they know they will be leaderless ere long. The thirsty horse for him who would not funk the fight. Oh, ye who love the Cause, keep the young

knight in the way. If you must speak, tell him that if he stop but for one moment to look for life's reward, the battle will be lost. The martyr's crown covers the furrowed brow, and hides the scars of battle. To gild this crown with foolish words of praise, and place it on the head of him who never yet has breathed the dust of fight, is to turn your young soldier into a vain and foolish popinjay. They are not few who "for the spangles wear the funeral pall." Alas, they are not few who make a bauble of the cross and spear.

There is a kind of praise that stunts the life, that clogs the cells of growth, and keeps men childish and fond of toys. The food of man is truth; and he who treasures in his life the consciousness of duty done, has furnished his soul so that it feeds from the roots. One day the parson was in the office of a great physician, and a mother brought a blear-eyed child to be treated for its ills. The physician tested the vision of the little lad, and his face was grave. "Doctor, what ails my child?" the mother asked. "Your child has candy-eye," he replied. "You have let him stuff himself with sweets till he has no desire for proper food. The eye must have its nourishment like every other organ. This child's eyes are starving; his hands are sticky now." A score of times since

## 124     In the Service of the King

then the parson has realized that when the forms he knew as evil began to grow dim, and the colour of his thought was blurred, he had an attack of candy-eye. The pilot has sticky hands. Is it any wonder he fails to read aright the signal lights?

The young knight brings a message from the King. Not yet he wears visible to the eyes of men the fatal gift the tempter gave. He keeps it hid, but ever with him. He comes to bring a message. Again the tempter meets him. He is a herald, and women praise the manner of his speech, or give to his words the subtler flattery of tears. The cup put to his lips is deadlier than Circe's wine, for if he drink thereof he thinks himself a king, and henceforth plays with life. He struts and fumes and plays the king. He has forgotten that he was but a voice. The tempter's gift no longer hid, he wears abroad as children wear a paper crown. He writes *Ich dien* upon his seal, but Him he serves is in a far-off land, and tarries long. When with the drunkard's doom his senses ache, he must have praise to still his sense of shame. The yearning for approbation, to loyalty betraying and betrayed, this seems the quest of God.

But there are other tempters on the road. For him who carries the message of the King danger

lurks not only in the kindly word but in the kindly deed. Nobody seems ever to have troubled to write the psychology of gifts, though there is a frugal philosophy of dole compiled as a protection against the prowling mendicant. Men are told how a gift affects the diseased tissue of the beggar's brain, but none has pointed out the effect on the healthy fibre of a strong man in his strength. The parson had not gone far on the way till he found that his life was threatened. Open-eyed, he was fighting the vanities, and though worsted often, still he knew his foe. Something else was sapping his strength, and fettering the freedom of his soul. He had found the poison in the kindly word of praise, but surely no danger lurked within the kindly deed. It hurt like the treachery of a friend to find that death lay hidden in the offered gift. As one who gropes for the door in a room grown suddenly dark, the parson searched the pages of the Book for confirmation of his dread. He found that confirmation written large, though none had ever shown to him the words of doom: "A gift destroyeth the heart"; "He that receiveth gifts overthroweth judgment"; "Take not a gift, for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise"; "He that hateth gifts shall live." What was he to do? Must life be stripped of kindly words and kindly

deeds? He sought the counsel of older men, and in crude fashion tried to make them understand. They smiled and called him a dreamer, and matched his texts with other texts; but with face hard set, the parson answered: "This may or may not be the universal law, but it shall be law for me. My weakness needs the prop. Praise shall not make me drunk, nor gifts put out my eyes." For many years the parson has thought on this, and ever more and more conviction grows that even in those callow days he stumbled on the truth. God's man is meant to be the voice of conscience to the sons of men, and human weakness incarnate in the broken lives of men, struggles to still the voice that speaks. If praise cannot seal the lips, then gifts shall sap the strength, till the voice become a whisper lost amidst the shriller sounds of earth. The voice of conscience heeded, leaves the one who hears steeped in a sacramental silence too deep for froth of praise. Men love, not praise, the man whose saving word has warned them of the deep abyss. Why should the soldier whine when the forced march carries him past the crowded inn where idlers feast? It is enough the town is saved; and when he comes again, the children crowd around and mothers add his name to love's best list, the ones for whom they pray.

### III

One evening the parson was taking tea at the home of a woman whose brilliant mind was a recognized asset of the social world. She and the parson never met that she did not fling some playful taunt at him. The taunt was ever a challenge to a battle of words. The company was a merry one, and the spirit of banter was in the air. The parson had had a hard week and was rather jaded. Suddenly, the hostess turned on him, and said: "Wake up, Parson, I have been watching you for a month, you are going to pieces in the extremities. Your talking finger, as my brother calls it, is paralyzed. You haven't made it give point to a good story in a blue moon. You know your favourite saint has taught us what all work and no play does for a fellow."

"You have brought it on your own head," replied the parson, laughing, "and you will have to listen to the telling of a story that has not yet been tested before an audience. Telling it to you now will be a sort of *experimentum in*



*vili corpore*, which is priest-Latin for 'try it on the dog.'

"One Sunday I preached at the University,—or, rather, I floundered for thirty minutes in a mass of words. I could not explain to myself why I failed so utterly, until my old cook furnished me with the explanation this morning. She would have left me, I think, if I had not got her a cow; and this morning I went into the kitchen to ask how she was getting on with a patent churn that was warranted to make butter in five minutes. I told her I would time her. She worked it for ten minutes, and still no signs of butter. Then she took a look into the churn, and said: 'Tain't no use of trying any longer. Just look in thar. The foam done riz first. Dere is too much milk for dis size dasher to handle, and much milk and little dasher makes de foam rise; and till you kill de foam de butter won't make. You is either got to take out some of dat milk or you is got to kill dat foam wid hot water.'

"I understood the meaning, then, of Sunday's failure: 'De foam riz first.' "

The parson had been drawn into the arena, and after his story the rest of the company were silent, while he and the hostess fought it out. To the parson, philosophy was a code of spiritual laws.

To her, it was a guess more or less clever at the answer to the riddle of life. She used to say that she read science to get away from adjectives. A volume of Huxley's was always at hand. She mocked at her scientific and philosophic studies, and always spoke of Huxley as the Grand Vizier of the Simian Dynasty. It was the introduction of the Grand Vizier into the talk that started the parson on the exposition of a droll bit of scientific nonsense. He expounded it with mock earnestness and with a wealth of illustration.

"Huxley," he said, "is a striking illustration of his own theory. He had a prehensile mind. He is hanging from the tree of life, head down, half the time. His mental activities are marvellous, though the vision he gets of life is distorted. The Simian philosophy, however well it may serve as a working hypothesis of man's descent, breaks down hopelessly in accounting for woman. Her progress is along entirely different lines. The oldest legend of the race is the story of the snake lady, Lilith, who was Adam's first wife. Eve was an afterthought."

"That is a contribution to Spencer's philosophy, not Huxley's," said the hostess.

"That is true enough," replied the parson, "but the merit of my scheme of things is that it furnishes a meeting point of the two schools. I have

## 130      In the Service of the King

been working on my thesis for years, and the data are unimpeachable. When I was a youngster I began to gather it at the women's meetings that used to be held in my home. Every woman talked at the same time, and the woman who talked the most was the one who heard most. The power of hearing seemed in some way to be measured by the use of speech. My sister, who was at times a voracious talker, could hear what every woman in the house was saying, and repeat twenty conversations carried on while she herself was talking. To me it was an inexplicable phenomenon, until I began to study snakes. The snake's auditory nerves lie along the tongue, and the tongue must be put in violent vibration in order for it to hear. The faster its tongue moves, the better it hears. The bird, we know, is evolved from a snake. The suggestion of the bird-nature of woman is ever a part of the male consciousness; and every woman, at some time in her life, is an angel to some man, and an angel is a sort of celestial bird. Browning calls his love 'half angel and half bird,' thus providing the missing link. Legend, habit, analogy, the link of snake and bird, and the instinct of man's highest moment of devotion, all substantiate the theory of woman belonging to the reptilia."

"I acknowledge myself vanquished," said his antagonist, "for to transform your enemy into a snake is, in the language of Scripture, to make him bite the dust. You are a great disappointment to me, however, for I thought woman's nature *terra incognita* to you; and I had promised myself the pleasure of being a continual surprise to you, but I find your knowledge of her antedates the record of creation."

"You little know how learned I am in this field," said the parson, still keeping up the solemn nonsense. "I am just beginning the second volume of a treatise that will, I think, revolutionize the world. It is, I believe, a new science, the science of feminine psychology. The discovery that woman belonged to a different genus from man has opened a new field of investigation. Every student of mental phenomena has been aware of the failure of psychologic laws to explain certain processes of the feminine mind. The only plausible explanation heretofore offered is that of an old Danish philosopher who suggests a difference in the polarity of intellect as the cause. The psychology of the text-books, the laws of logic, and the accepted processes of reasoning, whether written or spoken, are all in accord with the recognized dicta of a masculine psychology. The

## 132      In the Service of the King

most acute intelligences of the race, in its masculine line, whose success has been due to their knowledge of man, have ever been helpless in the hands of some clever girl. Even the giants of science have been hopelessly mizzled, for Kepler was as tractable as Mark Antony or Lord Nelson, thus proving that the very knowledge of masculine psychology, when applied by a master of the science to the working of the feminine mind, invariably led to a wrong conclusion. The new science shatters many idols of the market place. The thing we have been calling 'an intuition' in a woman, turns out to be as truly the result of an orderly, psychologic process as the reasoned conclusion of a man. The curious thing, however, is that woman has only two terms in her syllogism. She leaps from generalization to conclusion, unhampered by a troublesome middle term, and having one less term for the mind to carry, the process is quicker; but it is a leap in the dark, and the chance is about even that she will be right. Again, a woman's mind is incapable of dealing with a chain of sequences. A man's reasoning carries him far into the future; but woman deals with the present alone. The present wish furnishes the readiest impulse to act; hence, woman directs her persuasive powers to the affections alone. Having

established a sufficiently strong wish, she is sure of the result, and can direct it with unerring skill. She makes no appeal to the reason, for she knows instinctively that reason is her enemy. The secret of woman's power is that she is not a reasonable being at all. She is the enemy and successful foe of reason. When a woman attempts to reason, she fights with man's weapon, and is comparatively helpless. The study of causes is the highest sphere of investigation. Of first causes we know nothing; of final causes we know very little, though Coleridge contends that snuff is the final cause of the human nose. My own study has largely confined itself to proximate causes; and it is certain that woman's mastery of the present, and the manner in which she deals with men, have made her the proximate cause of most of the great events in history, and at the same time have made history the most unreasonable of things."

"You deserve the fate of Dr. Guillotin," said the hostess, "for having fathered such a hideous invention as your new science. I dread to think of the royal heads that will fall when the madness of a new-found liberty shall take possession of enslaved man."

"You both ought to be put in a lunatic asylum," said one of the company, "for when you two

## 134     In the Service of the King

once get started you drive a four-in-hand smash through the sacred preserves of science, history, and theology."

The hostess was evidently smarting under what she considered a fling at woman's mental processes, for there was a touch of acerbity in her tones, when she continued: "The parson works himself into a fine frenzy of loyalty to what he calls truth, and I can't make him see that he is devoting himself to only the first of the fine arts. Truth is a branch of æsthetics, and the world crowns the great artist here as elsewhere. The brilliant, untrained mind gives to the world the plausible. It attracts the passing attention of men much as she does a clever drawing in a magazine. The steady plodder, careful of his lines, and with a photographic mind which can catch and reflect that which it has seen at a particular time and under particular conditions, suggests a memory to every observer; and men admire, but weary of, the probable. He can paint a picture of his mother; and men accept, but tire of, somebody else's mother. Such men are truth's failures. Then comes the true artist—the man who can paint a woman who is the mother; a face which suggests not a fleeting memory, but which summons into life a presence. But the time comes when the canvas cracks and the colours

fade. The picture becomes a thing to criticize. The critics only write obituaries. That sacred science of philosophy which the parson dotes upon, is only a book of the dead. It is packed with funeral orations over dead truth. Truth is made by man, and the creature is as mortal as its maker. A little more elaboration, and a few great names with which to conjure, and your snake philosophy will be hung in a good position in the Salon of Science. It will hang there, too, till somebody gives the world a fish philosophy, and reduces your diversity to unity. I shall look forward to the great artist of truth who shall supersede you."

"His picture of the primal fish," said the parson, "will doubtless be a charming water colour." Then the change came over the parson. The soldier had been sitting with the crowd around the camp fire, jesting of war; but now he faced the enemy. The soldier was fighting for his King and the Cause. His talking finger was busy pressing home some argument, like an old Indian fighter ramming down the charge in his rifle. He commenced calmly enough, but the fierce joy of the fight was in his eyes:

"Your playful treatise on truth as a department of æsthetics, is the working creed of half the world. They make completeness, or prettiness, or utility,



## 136      **In the Service of the King**

the marks of truth. The philosopher wants completeness in his system; the artist demands beauty; the canny modernist, with an eye to the main chance, demands that truth pay dividends. He calls himself a pragmatist and asks of truth, 'Can you work?' which to him means only, 'Will you work for me?' You are right when you say that the study of philosophy is to me a passion. I love philosophy, but philosophers provoke me to rage by their irreverence. Truth is the august reality in whose presence my own littleness becomes an aching agony. Truth is the reality to whom my soul does homage as a king's man to his sovereign. Reverence is but a word that describes the behaviour of loyalty in the presence of his king. Reverence becomes service the moment it leaves the audience chamber. The summons into that presence has come to me many times. Sometimes in my study, while smelting the ore of another's mind, I have found the gold of reality, which is talisman of the presence. Sometimes in a mud hut on the mountainside, as I watched an unlettered slattern bathing the bloated face of a drunken husband, or gazing with sleepless eyes at the sick child on its rough bed of boards. Sometimes a beggar's word opens for me the door; and only yesterday I heard the Voice from the lips of

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a dirty little street Arab, who was the under-dog in a gutter fight. Just as I got to them the little chap, whose face was bleeding and who was being badly beaten, said, between his sobs, to the big boy who had him down: 'You can kill me if you will, but you can't make me say I didn't see you steal that old apple-woman's money.' I pulled them apart, and stood, uncovered, before that soiled messenger of the King, as he got up from the gutter. He is going to live with me, and I hope some day to prove my loyalty as truly as he did. I am a parson, and am one gladly, willingly, passionately. I am also a soldier of the great Cause, and follow the details of the fight in other fields with consuming interest. My own feeling as a private in the ranks is very different sometimes from that of the great leaders of the Church. I don't fear the materialists, for the first one that has a sick child betrays the utter weakness of his position. I don't fear, but welcome, the smug, self-complacent agnostics. To me, they are only the prim, liveried servants of knowledge, holding the door of the future open for the coming of the King. But I do fear—for they are the disloyal ones in the army itself—those idolaters who want a graven image of the truth. To coin a word, they are not truth-seekers,

## 138     In the Service of the King

but 'picturists,' makers and worshippers of pictures. Pale souls, who love a pictured storm, but who have never known the joy of fighting the wind for every inch of leeway, nor the shivering delight of dragging the boat through the last line of breakers to the beach. I took, perhaps, a roundabout way to a creed, and I was startled to find at last that my revelation, the one which had come to me, squared with the life of the Christ. What I had dimly seen and vaguely hoped for, that He was. Truth was sovereign, personal, living, compelling. I understood at last what He meant when He said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Pragmatism has given me the word I wanted. Christ, the Worker, Worker with fire, with sword, with disease, with death, counting nothing too costly that stands in the way to the end. I am persuaded that nothing but cowardice on the part of His Church keeps back the sound of the moving wheels of His chariot."

The men and women who were there had never seen the parson so deeply stirred. He had not once raised his voice; but the sustained passion of his speech made them wish to shield their faces from the too heated glow of the fire whose warmth kept them near. He rose, and held out his hand to the hostess without a word. She took it, and

turned to the company, and said: "You go too, I feel as if I had been jesting at the stars, and a mighty meteor had suddenly struck the earth beside me, scorching me as it passed."

#### IV

Almost at the beginning of his ministry, the parson began to be appalled at the prospect of the amount of sermon-making that lay before him. He preached one hundred and fifty times a year, and he calculated that if he were still in active service at sixty-five this would mean six thousand sermons to his credit or discredit. From the condition of utter mental and spiritual emptiness on Sunday night, he felt sure that the balance would be on the wrong sheet. He did not have the migratory instinct and did not believe in short-time enlistment. He enlisted for the war every time, and got his franchise transfer the day he unpacked his books. He faced the prospect of preaching to the same community for a lifetime. How could it be done? He could not depend on the thousand aids to preaching, the catalogues of which filled his waste basket. His mind, like his body, seemed to be an odd size, and he could no more clothe his mind in the garments of another's thought than he could practise economy

by wearing ready-made clothing. He could not preach an old sermon, for the reading of an old manuscript of his own has always filled him with a new admiration for the patient endurance of his people and goaded him to fresh effort not to strain it to the breaking point. He was the shepherd. He could not lead his flock to the strange waters of another's mind, nor dared he let them drink from the stagnant pools of his own memory. They must have the living waters. He was a messenger. He could not bring some hearsay tale or rumour of the King's will; he must seek audience with the King Himself,—hear Him speak, and know the One whose will he must make known to men. To know the King! The audacity of the desire frightened him at first; but once conceived, the desire became a passion. For many an agonizing month he struggled to be free. It is the fashion to mock at dogma; but dogma was once a living thing—the channel of the best life of men. Like some encircling vine it wound itself about the Tree of Life, and to tear it down with ruthless hands meant injury to that on which it grew. The impulse of youth was to use the axe, to strip the mind naked and bare, and let the life-blood of the faith in Christ heal the wounds. There are always two ways of looking at truth.

The parson stood alone one day in Melrose Abbey. Its broken arches and marred walls hurt him like the bruises on the face of a friend. While he looked, the ancient guardian of the Abbey, an old Scot, to whom every stone of the Abbey was sacred, came towards him. The parson asked the old man: "What vandal wrought this ruin?" There was a glint of humour in the eyes, but the voice that answered was solemn enough: "It was the work of John Knox, the Deformer." Whenever the parson has felt the desire to turn reformer, he thinks of the old Scot's answer. He determined not to run the risk of being a Deformer. He made up his mind to treat the ancient dogmas very much as another old Scotchman did the devil. The preacher who, in his two hours' discourse, had touched all the great themes of theology, paused for a moment, then said: "My brethren, we have now come to the subject of the devil, whom we will face boldly and pass by." The parson, intent upon the fulfilment of his one desire, has found no time to go heresy hunting within the Church, nor has he feared the taunt of heretic when flung at him. He has read the volumes wherein men disprove their knowledge of the Christ by the very tones in which they speak. He has found amusement in the solemn declaration of the omniscient build-

ers of complete systems. He has shocked the delicate sensitiveness of the trained ear of his city church by the repetition of the oft-repeated story of the Mississippi pilot, who, when asked by a stranger in the pilot house if he knew where all the snags were in the river, replied: "No, but I know where all the snags ain't. Tain't my business to hunt snags."

How was he to know the Christ? The translators had again and again woven their dogma into His words. The commentators were as timorous as the mediæval schoolmen. Fragments of His words had been broken from their context and made into shibboleths. The parson determined to see for himself; and a Greek lexicon, whose loose leaves and torn back tell the story of much thumbing, was his companion. Never will he forget the joy of one discovery. Many another, no doubt, had seen it, but had not passed on to him the precious secret. It was in the story of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer's answer to his own question the King accepts, and then He tells him a story. The parson had read that story a thousand times, but he had never caught but a suggestion of its beauty and its power till he found that when the King asked the lawyer a question at the close of it, He did not say "who



## 144      **In the Service of the King**

*was* neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" but "who *became* a neighbour?" That was the secret He came to tell. God does not command the impossible. You can love only your neighbour, the man next to you. The Jew read the law aright, but missed the wonder of it. God's law is ever the revelation of a principle. You not only ought to love your neighbour, you are bound by the necessity of your being to love your neighbour. The thing worth doing, the glory and the wonder of it is, that you can get next to any man. Here was a Samaritan who heard a cry of human need. He found a hated Jew. To get to him he had to break down the barriers of racial hate, of religious prejudice, of a lifetime of loathing; but he broke down those barriers to get to a man in need, and when he touched him his old loathing died. He was next to him, and he could do no otherwise than love him. His beast, his time, his money, his care, he gave with eager zeal. This, then, was Christianity, to smash the barriers and get next to your fellow-man. That was man's part; for the rest, the instincts of the soul of man could be trusted.

Step by step the parson followed, saw the King set His face to go to Jerusalem to worship in the temple, saw Him on the feast day leave the crowded

street and take a route that led through the sheep market. Why was He there? No other Jew would take that route on such a day, lest he be defiled. The King's way to the temple lay through the slums. As the parson saw the King stop by the pool to touch and bless the loathsome creature whose wrecked body told its tale of shame, he knew the meaning of the words, "Divine service," for which the Temple itself and all its offices are only the imperfect symbols. Back to the beginning the parson went, saw the Mother and her Babe, and stood awed at the great God's sweet remembrances of man; for, lo! among the many rich gifts of His love was the revelation of the heart of a boy. The Mother, like every other mother since, one day found that her boy had strayed out of her world. She found Him looking out into the big world, and asking questions. Every man of earth has stood as a boy just where the King stood; but who were those that gave the answers to youth's questionings? The parson pondered many an hour over the mystery of that growth from boyhood to manhood—the long apprenticeship to toil—the silent years of Him who for thirty years was the Christ of the home; saw Him at last break the bonds of home and village life and come into the larger life of His

## 146      **In the Service of the King**

people; saw the son of Mary's home, the village carpenter, assume the highest privilege of earth,—citizenship; saw Him touch every phase of His nation's life, until at last He dared what none even of His own hardy Galileans had dared to do—fling down the gauntlet to the corrupt Sanhedrin, and brand their assembly place as a den of thieves; saw Him stand for hours in that place that the challenge of His rights as a citizen might be taken up; saw the matchless majesty of Him who brought down certain death upon His head in an attempt to shame the leaders of His people to a cleansing of the highest courts of the nation. Among the many titles by which the parson learned to know the King was that of the first citizen of history. How He loved the things of earth! No poet ever sang the beauty of the flowers as He did. He made the sparrow itself a thought of God, and from the mothering instinct of the fowl He borrowed the symbolism of His fostering care. The central sun for Him was imagery sublime, but the humble lamp of twisted thread within a dish of oil, the flickering thing that lit the peasant's home, had for Him a meaning too. No home so poor but that a gentle spirit, a penny-dip, could give it light. The sunlight on the ripening grain! His was the one true eye that saw the garnered

sunshine in the headed wheat. He saw and loved the white light of the harvest field. It was, however, His manhood that thrilled the parson's soul. When Peter's anxious love strove to turn Him from duty's path, the matter touched His honour, and quick as the arrow springs from a taut bow His answer comes: "Back, you devil, let me pass." When Herod threatened, and when men whispered what the tyrant meant to do, He lifts His head, and loud enough for every spying ear to hear, flung back His answer: "Go tell that fox I do my work to-day." When in the garden the armed clients of the High Priest rushed on His little band, He steps forward into the light of their torches, and says: "I am the one you seek; let these men go. If there be crime, 'tis Mine alone." Tolerant of every misguided groping for the truth, but hating above all ugly things the whited lie. The Lord of Earth and Heaven, touching the lives of lowly peasants, hopeless outcasts, and proud pedants, but never in any mood one single touch of patronage. Wise above the measure of the race, but speaking ever in simple speech. Lifting the little children where they could see at work the mighty enginery of eternity, and explaining as a father to his child how the weaving of the web of life is wrought.

The parson had studied what the theorists call "the method of uplift," with its gospel of thrift, and its devil whisper that knowledge is power, motives that leave the soul untouched and only make effective the selfish instinct of the race. It was an increasing joy to study the King's way. Ever the human touch that dignified and ennobled. Ever the appeal to the latent gift of daring that is in every man. He offers Matthew the opportunity of walking with Him in the open life of day, and the man who had sold all for money shuts his ledger and closes his office in the rush hour of business. He offers the restless brothers the cup of agony and the baptism of fire when they come begging for place and power, and henceforth they are knit to him with hooks of steel. He meets the Magdalene, and instead of sermons, gives her a place near His mother. He goes as a self-invited guest to Zaccheus' home and henceforth an honest gentleman is master of the house where once lived only a rich publican.

Sometimes the reckless courage of the Galilean made the parson's breath come quick. Five thousand of the stoutest of the Jewish race threatened to take Him by force and make Him a King. He retires across the lake, and when they follow Him He tells them the terms on which alone He

will be their leader: "I am going to give my flesh for the life of the world. If you will do the same, then come with me. Not for Galilee alone, nor for Israel do I fight, but for the world. Will you follow?" The crowd fell away and only the awed and hesitating twelve were left. He faces them. "Do you not also want to go? Remember the conditions." He was ready to go on alone, if need be. Those who followed must have no doubt as to the meaning of the Cause for which he fought.

All along the parson knew that he was learning to know the King better day by day, but knew also that there were depths his littleness could not sound. He could watch Matthew bringing his clerkly skill to the effort of giving an orderly recital of the activities of that life that touched the changing life of man as the sunlight plays upon the moving leaves, and he has smiled when the critics disputed about the chronology of some act or utterance. The effort to be the exact chronicler of such a life was a task as futile as for a man to try to chronicle his mother's myriad services of love. He has pictured the alien Luke during those two years he lived with Paul at Cæsarea, searching the villages and countrysides for those whose privilege it had been to see and

hear the King, cross-questioning the man who once, at the approach of his fellow-man, called out, "Unclean, unclean," until the King heard that cry, and came to it. Luke knew what it was to be a despised alien. Was it from one of a hated race that he got that story of the good Samaritan? Who was the prodigal in whose heart had lived through all the separating years that story of the younger son? To Luke more than to the other chroniclers of The Life appealed the picture of the King at prayer. It was the alien recorder of the King's life that has given us the kneeling Christ. The empty pagan years of his prayerless life had taught him to prize the oasis hour of day when man drinks at the fount of God. In the intimate story of John, the parson learned how the King spoke to the understanding ear of friend. Such speech could find its way to written record only after the testing years had trained the brooding heart of him who loved, to sense the finer issues that the others had missed. It was with consuming interest that the parson followed Paul in that learner's effort to appropriate the Christ. The knowing ones of the critical school tell us that Paul is the founder of Christianity; that he was furnished a system of ethics and created for the Church a system of theology. To the parson

such words are meaningless. Day by day the Tarsian Jew tested some hitherto unused lesson of the King's life, and power that was a living presence touched his life. He died learning, and the record of his desire to know Jesus is next to The Life itself, the most precious heritage of the race. He left us the secret of his method: if a man would learn Christ he must first know the truth as it is in Jesus. Ever since the parson was a little boy the poet has been his prophet. He has never quite got over the habit of turning the pages of a new book in search of scraps of poetry, taking these first as the child plucks the raisins from his cake. It was an added joy, then, to find a poet among those who knew Him here on earth. Peter had the gift of eloquent speech, but in his letters the poet shows himself. The parson tried again and again to make his own in English speech the beauty of Peter's words. The spirit he believes he has caught, but that illusive something that marks the poet's hand is lost. Thus Peter sings the making of a Christian gentleman: Have a love that reaches out to lift the fallen ones, and throw the mantle of that love about the sin-soiled ones, and take them home with you, nor think yourself ill-used with such for guests. As each one has received a home, the



## 152     In the Service of the King

gift of God, so let him use it as a beautiful almoner of the many coloured kindness of the Lord.

When the parson was a boy at school he counted himself lucky if it came to him to translate that portion of the *Anabasis* which described the army of Cyrus on the march. Xenophon always repeated the same formula: "Cyrus marched so many parasangs, so many days' journey, etc." In fact, the teacher used to say that when Cyrus marched the class marched, but always halted with the army. One day the boy had no desire to halt, for he found a story that has lived in his brain ever since. Cyrus is riding ahead of his army and looking back finds that the line has halted. He returns, and sees the wagon train stalled in the mud. Standing well back are the rich, young Persian nobles watching the struggling horses and guarding their silken robes from being spattered by the mud. Cyrus looks first at the helpless teams, and then at these silk-clad soldiers. His anger finds voice at last: "You lordly sons of Persia, you offered to go with me into the East, and help me win a kingdom, and here you stand guarding your silken dress and tinsel trappings while my army waits. Fling off those flowing robes that clog your hands and feet. Into the mud with you, every one, or turn your traitor faces to the West."

In the East the servant's loose cape was furnished with a girdle, which, when tied, left the hands and feet free. This cape was called, in common speech, a "tie-up." It brought a thrill to the parson like that he had when he read of the anger of the warrior prince, to hear Peter say, "If you would be really free to serve, put on your tie-up and help."

When will the Christian Church, with daring greater than had any of those early teachers save Stephen, give to the King His chosen title of Son of Man? The truth as it is in Jesus! Paul tells us that such knowledge gives to the old man the heart of a boy again. The parson had studied the office and function of the Christ in the books, but it was a book-Christ he knew at best. The study of the life of Jesus took him where he saw the hopes and needs of all the race converge. He saw them meet and be fulfilled; and while he looked the Son of Man, who is the promise of the race, was crowned in his heart the Son of God. Nor since that day has it ever been aught but a splendid privilege, in any company, whether of abjects or of jeering worldlings, to bear witness on bended knee or with uplifted head to his allegiance to the Lord of Life.

One day there came to the parson's study a man

whom he had known in the hunting field and in the home. He took his seat, and plunged straight into his story:

"Parson, I want your help. The ties that bind me to home must soon be broken. Only one is left, and she is near the end of life. I have been wondering what will then become of me. I have tried it all—dissipation till it palled; adventure till I became almost as wild as the things I hunted. The things with which men try to kill the restlessness are stale. I have fought with beasts and men, and learned to master both. Desire seems dead in me, save the maddening itch to be forever on the move. The *Wanderlust* is all that is left. I have no goal and seek nothing."

"No chart, no haven, and no pilot?" said the parson. "The end seems pretty well assured. It's either a wreck or a derelict."

"That's just the way I figured it out," he replied. "You have used the very word—'a derelict.' There is enough of manhood left in me to hate that thought. That is why I came to you. I have been watching you for years, and you seem to know what you are headed for; so I came to get a chart."

"Well," replied the parson, "you know what I am—a minister of Christ."

"Oh, cut out that sort of talk," he broke in. "Don't ask me if I believe in Christ. The question has no meaning to me. If you produce the evidence and prove your case I will assent. It's to me only a historical question, and I believe in Julius Cæsar on the same grounds. Please don't try any conjure words on me. Except for a funeral service I haven't been in a church for twenty years, and the whole business is absolutely meaningless to me."

I hardly know where to begin," said the parson, "if you don't believe in anything, there doesn't seem to be a starting point."

"But I do believe in something," answered the man. "I believe in you—that's why I'm here."

These unexpected words haunted the parson for many a day. That night he awoke trembling, with the words still ringing in his ears: "I do believe in something,—I believe in you." "But you don't understand," answered the parson, "what it means when you say you believe in me, and ask for a chart. I don't know the way any better than you do. I am like a man in the engine room. The pilot runs the ship. My one duty is to obey the signals. When he says, 'Full speed ahead,' I pull the throttle; and when he signals, 'Stop,' I choke the steam."

## 156      In the Service of the King

The parson laid his hand on his friend's shoulder, and asked: "Will you kneel here by me and let me pray God to guide us?"

"No," said the man, "this is too serious a business for me to tolerate any mummary. Of all the nonsense you preachers talk, prayer seems to me to be the greatest. I can think of nothing more foolish than a man crouching by his bed and mumbling a few words, and then getting up with the thought that something is going to come to pass because he has said a few words. The whole thing is a superstition, too foolish to discuss seriously."

"See here," said the parson, "answer me. You have been a soldier, and you have had men under you at other times. Tell me, did you ever face the situation where the lives of helpless men and women depended on you and those under you facing danger, and when the crisis came they failed you?"

"More than once," he answered.

"What did you do?" asked the parson.

"There wasn't but one thing to do," he replied. "I asked them if they were men or lily-livered cowards, and told them they might save their skins if they wanted to, but I was going to do my duty."

"What happened then?" asked the parson.

"Oh, they followed me. A man with a drop of red blood in him couldn't swallow that talk."

"Could you have driven them in at the point of a pistol?" asked the parson.

"Not a foot," he answered.

"Well, then, what made them go in?" persisted the parson. "Surely there was something that worked the change. One minute they were the lowest order of human life—cowards; the next, they were ready to die with you. Something changed them. What was it?"

"If you put it that way, I suppose I did it," he answered.

"I have no doubt of it," said the parson. "Now if you can work a change like that, don't you think it a little impertinent to ridicule the idea of the great God of the universe doing for you something of the same sort of thing that you did for those men?"

For a moment the man looked dazed; then his eyes flashed. "By Heaven, I see it! You are talking about prayer. Why the thing isn't nonsense at all. Of course He can do it. Man, why didn't you come and tell me about it long ago? Why, the thing proves itself. Yes, you can pray for me. I'll pray for myself. We've got a start-

## 158     In the Service of the King

ing point now. Go on, and tell me something about your Pilot."

For hours they sat and talked, and when he held out his hand in parting, he said: "Don't bother about me, Parson. I'll get the Book and learn the Pilot's signals. I know what it is to obey, and I promise to follow instructions. I don't know yet the port I'm making for, but I'm beginning to trust the Pilot, and I shall not be a derelict. Be sure of that."

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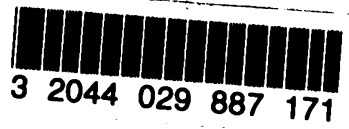












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